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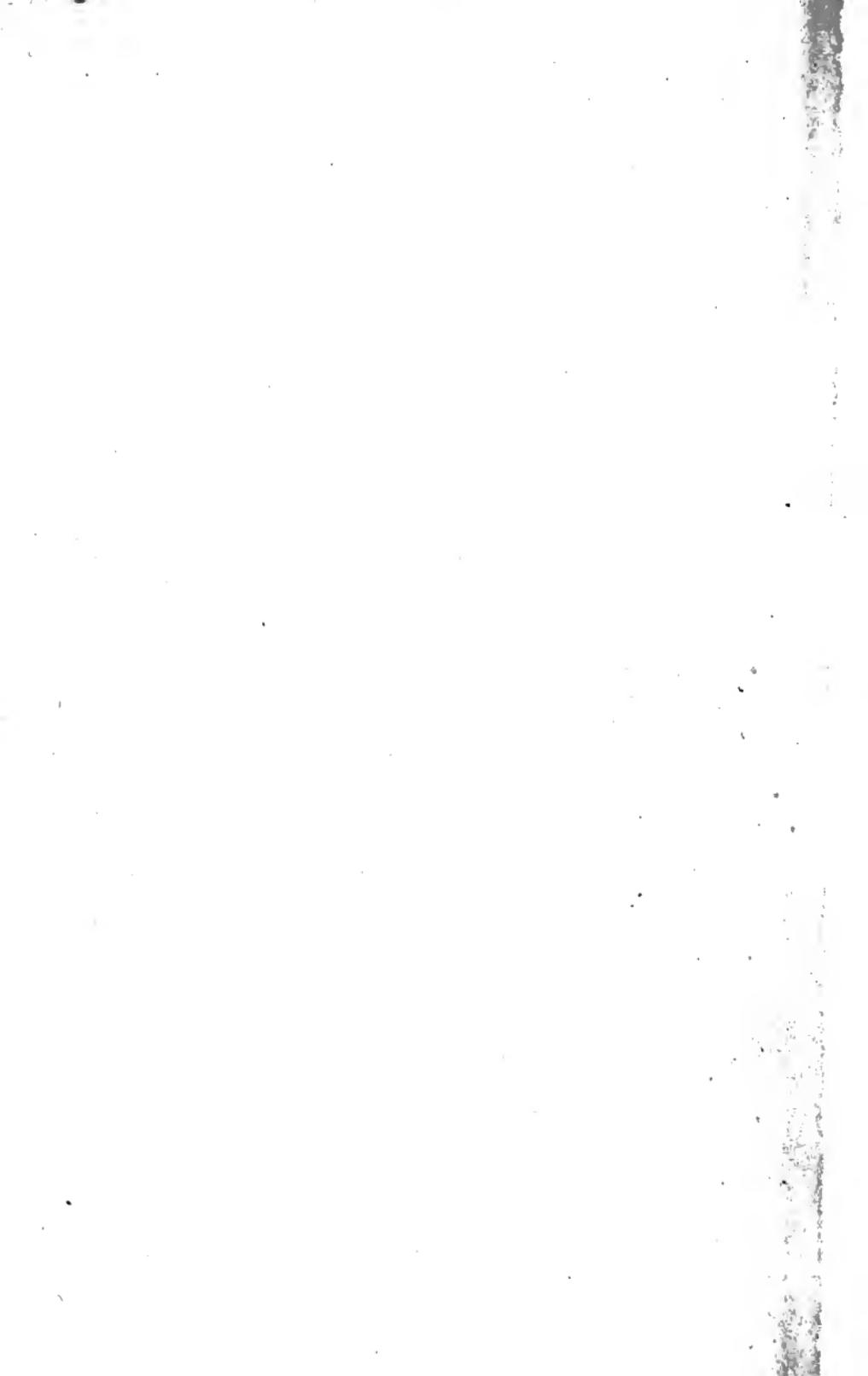
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STRAYED FROM THE FOLD.

A STORY OF LIFE IN THE NORTHWEST.

FOUNDED ON FACTS.

BY MINNIE MARY LEE.

"Woe to that daring soul which hoped that, having retired from Thee, she might still find something better."—ST. AUGUSTINE.



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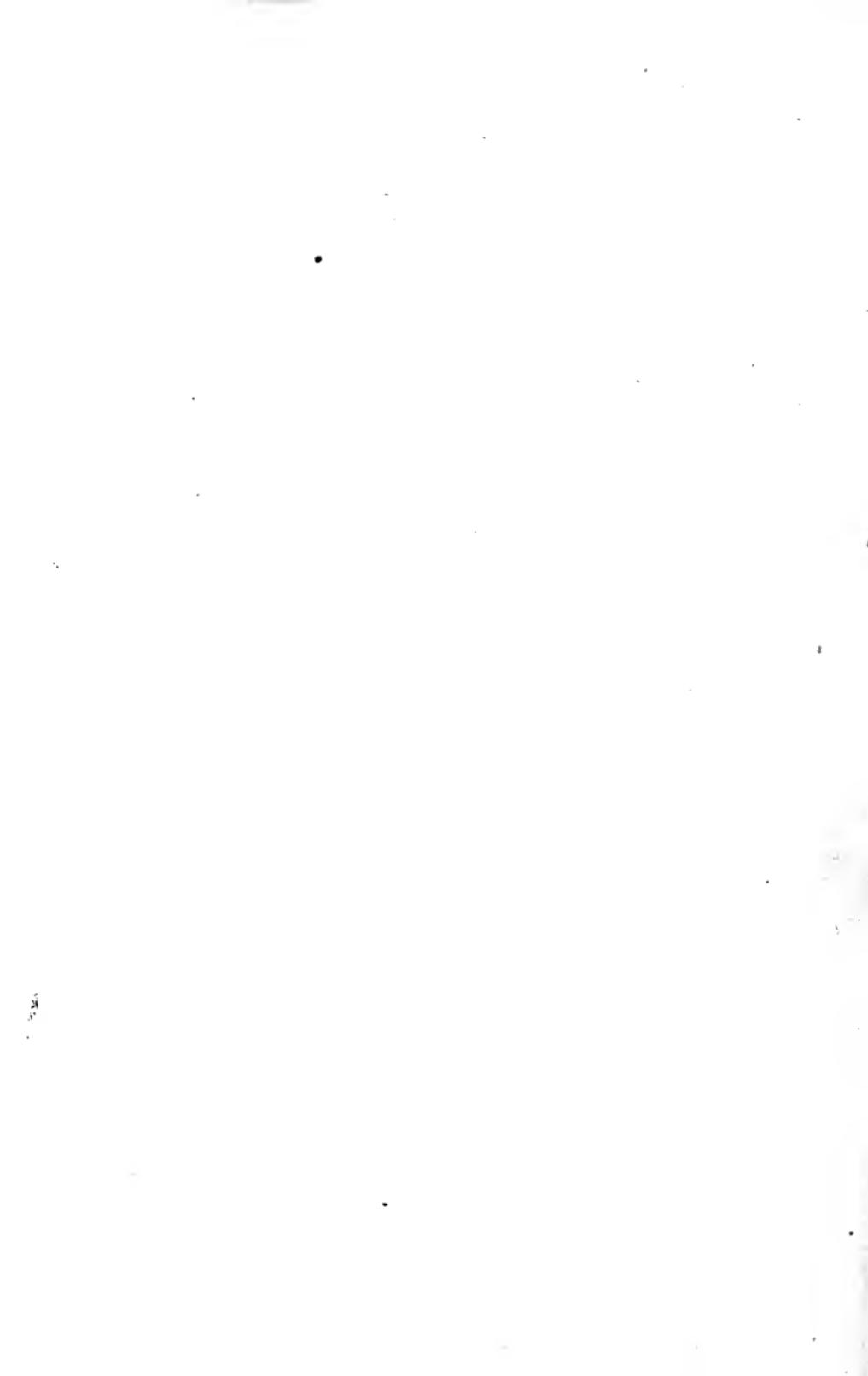
THE AUTHOR DEDICATES HER BOOK.

Elgin, June 5, 1878



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STRAYED FROM THE FOLD.

A STORY OF LIFE IN THE NORTHWEST.

CHAPTER I.

MARK'S LETTER TO CECILIA.

GOING to drive, Mark ; and without me?" The dark, handsome eyes of the person addressed looked down on the violet orbs, in whose beauteous depths were expressed somewhat of trouble and more surprise.

"Yes, *ma petite* ; and I shall be gone, perhaps, until to-morrow this time. Here is a letter for you, which you may read and consider"—taking from his pocket a sealed package, which he gave into the lady's hand.

Cecilia glanced at the superscription, and at once recognizing Mark's own chirography, looked at him questioningly. As he answered not to her mute inquiry, but drew on his gloves, and was about to leave, she laid her hand hinderingly on his arm and said :

"What can this mean, Mark ? What can you have

to say to me on paper that you cannot say by word of mouth? Did we not quit writing love letters years ago?"

"Yes, Cecilia—but you will find all in the letter"—and he would have left her.

"Are you in such great haste? There is some mystery here, and I am not fond of mysteries. Stay now, and yourself unravel it—or better, wait a few minutes for me to make ready to accompany you. I can be very quick; say now? The idea of your going off without me, now that I am able to be around again!"

"No, Cecilia, I cannot wait; besides, I wish to give you time to digest the contents of that epistle;" and with none other adieu save a stately bow, he withdrew.

Cecilia essayed no further detention. In the gentleman's manner was something so unusual and forbidding that her pride was touched, and she remained silent in the doorway, until, after touching his hat from the carriage, he had rolled rapidly away.

Returning within to her room, she murmured half audibly:

"Since I have been laid up with my scalded foot, he has become used to doing without me. At first I was always with him or he was always with me. It is my fault, however. He was willing to remain home and keep me company. But I thought that would be selfish, and Mark is such an ornament to society; how could his presence be dispensed with?"

And now that I am able, can it be that he really prefers going without me? But this journey—ah, perhaps, this mysterious letter will reveal the whole. Not in six years have I had a letter from him—let me see, the last was a brief note the week before we were married. Six years married."

Cecilia had reached her room, and, seating herself in an easy chair, which seemed to form a part of the ample bay window, glanced a moment at the well-known handwriting of Mark Varnam, and broke the seal:

DEAR CECILIA:

"There is a destiny that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them, as we will."

That these words are so often quoted, proves that many an experienced soul assents to their truthfulness. We are not masters of ourselves. One thing we are to-day, and another to-morrow. In the morning we prepare, and at evening disarrange our plans. Except death, mutability is the only certain thing beneath the sun. And even death, what is it but the most fearful of all mutabilities? As the unseen wind creates tempests and havoc upon earth, and billows and destruction upon sea, so doth the uncreated spirit of the universe sweep over the mind of man, demolishing old, and creating new theories, burying treasured friendships, and upheaving new ones, so changing, indeed, the face of the soul, that unto itself it is scarcely recognizable. Man, proud and arrogant, may deny this inherent frailty; he may gather up his energy and strength, and, like the giant oak, briefly stand against the mighty element—at the last, alas, to be o'er mastered!

We have talked this over, Cecilia. Indeed, within all the wide range of thought, what is there upon which we have not held converse? And always to coincide. Differ not from me now, my friend, when you shall have followed me farther.

Our union of six years has been one of peculiar harmony. But you will remember, you must recall, that I submitted to the ceremony of marriage only under protest.

Beholding so many poor souls bound down by the relentless thralldom of the marriage tie, or, which is the same thing, groaning under the false opinion that that tie upon earth is irrevocable, I and others of our society resolved to be hampered by no such bonds, fettered by no civil law, no divine enactments, so-called, no "until death us do part."

It was my fate to meet you, Cecilia, and at that first meeting to love you. You were a child of the Church, an adopted daughter of a bigoted woman, who esteemed herself a saint. Neither she nor you would give in to my peculiar views. True, I loved you, and with that sort of love, I fondly dreamed it might prove eternal. But who ever stood up before priest and altar, not blindly caressing the same idea? The inebriate who abuses wife and children, the woman who makes of her home a purgatory, had been deluded by the same fond imagination. What came to most—unkindness, estrangement or more congenial love—might come to us. In that case it was my will that no yoke should bind, no irrevocable law chain us unwilling together.

While I, above all others, was first to you, and you, above all others, first to me, our union should continue so long and no longer. The union would indeed be broken when either you or I should prefer another. Then, in our purer code, would it be a sin for us longer to dwell together. However, at that time you could not adopt my views. Your mother was horrified at them. There was a violent contest, and the prospect was that, through Mrs. Leigh and the priest, I should love you altogether. My will arose in rebellion—they should not separate us—and, as you would consent to be mine only upon their own terms, I was forced to yield.

I submitted to the ceremony apparently all-willingly at the last—but under protest secretly, as you know. For six years in my heart you have reigned supreme. Until one month ago, I had no thought that another woman, although she were an angel, could usurp your place.

The last time that you attended our reunions at Mrs. Lennox's, you met her niece, Miss Laura Lynn. You will recollect her, I think, as, after our return, you remarked upon her surpassing beauty. Directly after, you met with your sad accident, which disabled you from going out. With your customary generosity, you insisted that I should still attend our weekly reunions. Miss Lynn was ever present. I was from the first attracted by her beauty, but without a thought or intention of her supplanting you in my affections. From her childhood, however, she has been trained in our ideas, and is fully imbued with hostility to the present foundations of society. I was not surprised, therefore, at the perfect freedom of her manners, nor at the artless simplicity with which, at our third or fourth interview, she confessed her admiration for me, and her love !

At first I felt a shock as if I had committed treason, and you had received a wound by my listening to her words unrebuked. Upon reflection, however, considering your knowledge of my views at the time of our marriage, I came to feel I had a right to listen to her words; at the same time deeming it utterly impossible that her sweetest tones could ever come to charm me as the voice of Cecilia.

I had thought, my friend, that life with you was the extreme of happiness and contentment. Of content it might be and was; but of happiness not now nor henceforth.

And you, Cecilia? I do not go from you because you have not been good, true and loving. I respect you as the best of women, and am confident that with your usual unselfishness, you will place no obstacle in the way of my happiness. I intend to make with Laura a continental tour, and shall be absent abroad perhaps for a year or two. My correspondence will appear in the H—and in the T—. You and I have often talked of taking this trip together—and, had you been more anxious about it, doubtless it would have been accomplished. But you were so attached to your home—your home was your sweet world, you often said—but Laura is intoxicated with the idea of beholding the wonders of the old world.

Then, too, a temporary absence will seem to break the shock of

this abrupt change. For although, of course, it will be all *au fait* in my own set, for whose opinion alone I care, yet even there will be gossippings and lifting of eyebrows. After all, there is left a little of the old leaven—a shadow of the old prejudice. That is because we do not live in accordance with our principles; we go along, following too closely the ancient pathway, too inert for change, too fearful of a false move, losing thereby that more perfect happiness which is the very aim and object of our reformation. Laura is really in advance upon this subject. She, at least, is ready, and with her, I also, to put our principles into practice, and to show to the world our fearlessness of its censures, and our open defiance of its anathemas. * * *

There was still more of this contemptible letter; but, as before its close it was crumpled in the angry hands of her to whom it was addressed, we will be excused from further quotation. And yet, after a few moments, the leaves were smoothed out again and the whole epistle finished word for word.

Cecilia did not faint, nor did she become any marble personation of righteous indignation. She remained, alas, a perfect woman of flesh and blood, though her human heart seemed smothering in its gushing wounds, and every nerve quivered with quick and torturing agony.

Was she the same Cecilia who had carelessly sat down to read her letter? Were they the dear walls of her own room enclosing her; or, formed they not rather the cruel engine, which by gradual contraction was oppressing, stifling and grinding her to powder?

O, the world, a few brief minutes before so beautiful, might come now to its crash and doom, the sun might be darkened, the moon turned to blood; for, unto

Cecilia the stars had indeed fallen from their places, and chaos reigned. In her world blight had smitten every green thing ; the black shadow of death encompassed all.

Cecilia closed her eyes and bowed her head upon her folded hands. Could she but awaken from this fearful dream, could she but banish this direful vision, or grope her way from out this utter darkness ! O, bitter hour that had curdled her life into such agony !*

The stricken woman sank upon the floor. Her golden comb fell out, and her glossy hair, in purplish-black waves, fell about the little form that held heart so susceptible to suffering.

“ O, agony, keen agony
For heart that’s proud and high,
To learn of fate how desolate
It may be ere it die.”

“ My life is finished—is finished—and by his hand—O, woe is me—by his hand ! ” This, poor Cecilia repeated over and over after the first wild moments of distraction. Her idol, that had been enthroned so loftily, had fallen from its worshipful place. Mark Varnam had been her hero, her master, her king. She had no one but him, no treasure else upon earth or in heaven. All the men and all the women of the universe were as naught to her ; he was princely and perfect ; he was hers, she was his—was not this enough ?

Though an angel from Heaven had told this trust-

*And curdled a long life into one hour.—*Byron.*

ful woman that another should usurp her place in his home and heart, she would not have believed it. How could she believe it, even himself telling her? What wonder that his lip hesitated to speak the cruel words that his bolder hand, unabashed, could commit to paper!

And yet—and at this reflection the stricken woman shuddered—had Mark Varnam broken or gone beyond his compact and hers? Had she not married him with the constantly expressed determination on his part of adhering to views previously entertained, that either party should be entirely free to seek his or her happiness independently of the other?

There was to be no slavery. Restraints were to be thrown off the moment they were felt to be such. Irksome things should not be borne.

With pangs of suffering and twinges of conscience did this unhappy woman review the contest to which her husband had alluded, the contest that had preceded her marriage. She recalled the warnings, the pleadings, the expostulations of her pious mother and of the excellent Father Aloysius. The latter had depicted to her how destructive to the soul was the entertainment of any such principles as those which Mark Varnam professed. He had endeavored to impress upon her mind that the only guarantee to permanent nobleness and uprightness of character was a steady adherence to Christian truth at all times, and under every circumstance; that she who gave her happiness in keeping of one unorthodox on the great

subject of Christian marriage, thereby tacitly consented to any unlawful infatuation which might temporarily influence him, nay, to a separation from herself. For, even though she adopted not his views, she at least rendered herself subject to them. And now, following the clear reasoning of this good father, too late remembered, she saw how, with her own hand she had held the knife with which had been reft in **twain** bonds that had begun to fret. A full and solemn faith in the indissolubility of Christian marriage was the very and only thing that could have kept her husband true to her. It would have bound him in honor. He would have shrunk from its infringement. In it only, in its full integrity, lay the inherent power for resisting temptation, for restraining selfishness, and all the evil that in poor human nature lies.

If aught were needed to convince Cecilia of the utter falsity and worthlessness of the principles which had governed Mark Varnam, and of the detriment to character which the practice of them involved, a reperusal of his letter would have been sufficient.

Was the vain, egotistic, selfish writer of this letter the Mark Varnam who had been the object of her love and worship? Ah, what degeneracy was here! How could one month have so changed him! One little month ago, and he would have wept tears almost of blood to have beheld his Cecilia in this depth of woe! He would have pronounced maledictions upon his own head could he have dreamed that his hand should have thrust her thus low.

Now he gives no thought to her grief, nor does he express one emotion of pity for her wrecked and ruined life. He must have known, while writing, that every word of his would be to Cecilia a barbed arrow; but he was armed so strong in selfishness, and had become so blinded by his infatuation, that he hesitated at nothing in order to be able to join the woman who had completely enthralled him.

How had the mighty fallen! *She* could never have played the part of a Laura Lynn. She never would have sought to win a man from his allegiance to the woman who loved and trusted him.

This reflection brought Cecilia to the conclusion that the woman who supplanted her was not worthy of Mark Varnam as he *was*, and that she had already brought him vastly low from his high estate.

“He will never be happy with her,” cried Cecilia aloud, rising from her lowly posture, and flinging back the disheveled hair that had become wetted with her tears.

“He will never be happy with her, and I shall be avenged,” and a gleam of triumph for a moment shot from her violet eyes. For a moment only, and then she added: “Mark Varnam unhappy, and I not with him? I, Cecilia, his wife—his wife before God and man.”



CHAPTER II.

CECILIA'S FLIGHT.

NEVER had stood bride before altar with more loving loyalty, or more intended constancy than animated the soul of Cecilia Leigh when she had placed her hand in Varnam's, and pronounced the words, "faithful unto death." She was a true woman. She reposed utmost faith in the stability of the man to whom she gave her hand. From the depths of her own loving heart she judged that his heart was all her own. She deemed it quite as impossible that he could ever stray from allegiance to her as she knew it to be that she could find aught in another to exclusively interest or engage her. In truth, she cherished the same confidence in his forever-abiding constancy to herself as if he had been in all things orthodox, and not a follower of William Godwin, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the many very lesser lights of the present day. She never adopted his principles, nor found congeniality amongst his associates. If she mingled with them, it was because he was of their midst. She weari ed of hearing continually about the great wrongs

in society. She was tired of reiterations that the only way in which these wrongs could be righted was by elevating woman above and beyond man's tyranny. That woman, as wife, was but the slave of man. Let her cease to be his wife; let her be his companion simply, and his equal, free and independent, at liberty to leave him when he shall become arbitrary and exacting. Let him be compelled to lower his high-handed authority, and be emphatically taught his true and proper place. This theory found no favor with Cecilia. She scorned the purport of the words. These words, it is true, were honied over, and upon every protruding thorn that their true sence shot forth was hung a rose—a rose that was not a rose, but only the semblance, as was all this fine talk a trickery and deceit.

Cecilia was intellectual and literary, and as members of his club—we may call it club, or what not—made pretensions both to learning and to intellect, she found conversational topics of far more interest than the hackneyed woman question. Then, also, her innate love for the beautiful and **true** kept her heart comparatively pure, and **exerted upon** her husband a salutary influence. **Nor** had Cecilia Leigh forgotten the teachings of her childhood and youth. And although she had strayed away from the fold of the faithful—although she no longer sought strength and grace from the Christian's common Mother, the Church of God, yet the Divine food that had once nourished her, the grace that had once flown into her

heart, still made impression upon her character, as if they had become woven with her life.

Mark Varnam was a bright star in this non-descript revolutionary world of thinkers and dreamers, and, we may add, profaners. He thought it very fine to be called an independent thinker. In his estimation, to be an unbeliever in Christianity betokened a great mind. He had been educated a pagan—been brought to believe that Christianity was a myth; a beautiful myth, indeed, invested with much of poetry and charm, still, a myth only! With its poetry and grace, however, he thought, were its thorns of superstition and spiritual bondage that made woman especially subordinate, and retarded learning, science, wealth and progress.

Mark Varnam had been educated to believe this; but Cecilia Leigh had been trained to no such faith as this. Hers was one of those souls that adventitious circumstances may render grand and heroic. Her husband's theories could not take hold of her, nor she of them, with that tenacity which is of life or death. They would never have sustained her beneath the ax or in the flame. Yet never a Cecilia or an Agnes strove with braver spirit to catch God-given grace in midst of scorn and torture, than would have done this misguided victim of a false teaching.

As we have said, Cecilia lifted herself from the floor and stood erect. She shook her head, and waves of abundant hair flowed down her shoulders; her clasped hands embraced her forehead, and through a mist of

tears she looked upward. Ah, upward we glance when light is turned to darkness, when hope is flown, and peace consumed to ashes. Cecilia had no treasure in that upper world to which her eye instinctively turned. Earth, however, had slipped from beneath her feet; and the first involuntary cry of the soul, so long forgetful of God, was this anguished supplication: "God help me now!"

To whom on earth could she turn? Whither should she go? One thought presented itself. She would bury her story and her grief within her own bosom, and herself from all familiar eyes. Somewhere in the wide world, in the West, perhaps, she might find a quiet place, where, in some modest way, she could earn her daily bread. She was not the first woman who had bitterly suffered. She had read of hundreds of such cases, and they had passed her memory like portraiture of fiction with which they had become blended. Now, they uprose before her mental vision as stern realities; and she became conscious of a new spirit of heroism prompting her to brave boldly the storm which had wrecked her still youthful life.

"In another month I shall be twenty-six. It was on my twentieth birth-day that Mark brought me to his home;" mused Cecilia as she went about the rooms putting together her own personal property.

"I thought a long life of many scores of years would be too brief; now I know that these six have been too many, since they thus must close. O, that

he had died—they would have been sweet tears wept instead of these so bitter, bitter!

“Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea,
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.”

“O, Coleridge, did you write those lines for me? I am a shipwrecked mariner, and the most fertile-fancied poet could imagine for me no gleam of light. Henceforth, alone, alone! no clasp upon my hand; no one word of love through all the years—perhaps, though death will come, and death would be indeed my merciful deliverer. Alas, that one should sigh for death, in the very morning of life! Yet, why not, when the true life is finished—finished as is mine!

“And he will come to-morrow, wondering what I will say. He will call me and look for me—for me, who have ever flown to him at his first step or word. Will he be glad when he searches for me in vain? Will he congratulate himself that he has escaped a scene, and that I have, indeed, placed no obstacle in the way of his happiness? Will he wonder if I went away in anger—O, I would not have him think that I *could* be angry with one I have so loved. There is no room for anger in my heart; it is so full of grief. He was all—all I had in this world. Has he been all this while a demon unworthy of my love? Has my idol been but clay? Were angels from the first only devils in disguise, and did God fail in His handiwork? No: angels were sinless and they fell! Was Mark

less strong and noble than pure intelligences that had peopled heaven? Was it stranger that he than that they had fallen from their high estate?

“Shall I leave a word for him? Ah, the whole vocabulary of words could not express my woe. Silence will speak my farewell better. And he hath no need of word from me. He bends his ear unto another voice, forgetful now of mine. O, that I could feel anger instead of grief—contempt instead of pity. Alas, to remember what I have lost! It *is* sweet to be so loved as I have been—to feel one heart in all the wide, wide world is yours, that one eye will brighten at your presence, and a bounding step will greet you. If of all this death had robbed you, it would seem less cruel; for death *is* cruel; from death we do expect but cuts and stabs; but for the loved hand and heart to strike a blow that almost kills—not quite, leaving you to gasp and groan, a living death for weary years—O, there are no words to say how sad this is!

“Yes, these jewels I will take. He gave them me, and liked that I should wear them, and praised my heightened beauty I did love praise from his lips. For his dear sake I rejoiced to be called beautiful.

“Now it is Laura Lynn. I do not fancy her; I could not like her even. God forgive me! I would not be unseemly jealous, but if I remember rightly, there is about her face an insipidity that bodes a vacant soul. She may have that nameless charm

that wins men's hearts, but I would have deemed Mark Varnam one who could not long be held by beauty simply.

“ ‘Tis strange how calm I am ; there is no tremble in my fingers, and my tears have ceased to flow. It does me good to talk—to hear my own voice ; it soothes, as if it were another's. And I have heard it said, or somewhere read, that before greatest woes the reeling soul is rocked to calmness. I would go somewhere far away, in some desert, cave or grot outside the busy world forever. Only my wardrobe that I need ; and my jewels—not to wear—the dead should not be thus bedecked—but for doctor's fees, a shroud and coffin—for Cecilia Leigh, though poor, forsaken, would not be pauper-buried.

“ How well she died—our child, our little Nell. I thought they were the saddest tears I wept for her ; now I know the difference.

“ There, one trunk holds all. It is enough and more. Shall I take into memory another picture of these walls ? A Guido's hand could not more sweetly sketch it. Were he still faithful ! If he were, O God, I would drink the air because perfumed with his breath ; I would kiss the floor because hallowed by his foot.

“ Mark Varnam, how I have loved thee ! Eve must have been happy quitting paradise ; she did not go alone. She did not even figuratively die, as might have been said had she gone forth companionless.

“ For me, I go alone, never to return. Alone !

Never! terrible words that assume the shape of giants, every letter standing out a two-edged sword, doubly wounding.

“Is there a God in Heaven? O, faith of my childhood, come back to me! Sweet Mother in Heaven, pray for me! Through all these years I have forgotten, neglected Thee; could I—might I—return unto Thy holy feet? Prostrate, pleading I would come before Thee, invoking Thy intercession—if I dared.

“He is dead—dear Father Aloysius, who would have prevented my marriage! He was good and wise. He must have known to what troubles, what grief such principles as Mark Varnam’s would lead? But I would not be guided—I would go on in my own headlong course—and behold the result! Were he living now, I would pour out my sorrows at his feet. The young priest who holds his place—but I cannot—I must think—I must wait and reflect. Once I heard at a Sunday school :

“Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,” &c.

“First, I must go far from here. Oh, all ye dear things that I leave behind, tell him I loved him. Alas, ye cannot tell him how truly I am broken hearted.”

Thus from Mark Varnam’s home went Cecilia, his wife, so dense a cloud of grief enveloping her she could discern no ray of the light that shone above her goldenly from afar.



CHAPTER III.

WESTWARD JOURNEYINGS.

UON her hurried arrival at the depot, Cecilia found herself amidst the greatest bustle and confusion. A train stood in waiting, into which crowds were gathering, and the loud puffs of accelerating steam clearly indicated an almost instant departure. As beside her one trunk Cecilia stood speechless and aghast, a man, who was evidently an official, called out:

“Do you wish to go upon the express train, madame?”

“Is it going West?”

“Yes; you have not a moment to lose; get your ticket. Get it on board, or—jump on quick—I’ll bring your check when we’re asail;” and dragging along her trunk as if it were a bandbox in lightness, he left her to make her way alone to the cars, which were densely crowded.

Cecilia stood for a moment to take breath after her hurried entrance. In that very moment the train started and Cecilia experienced a pang of fear lest her trunk had been left behind. She had not learned that express-train officials, by long habit, acquire

movements almost electrical; and, after a few moments, she was surprised to find placed in her hand the check which assured her that her fears had been groundless.

Glancing through the cars, Cecilia could perceive no vacant seat. She started forward, however, and when about midway, a little woman in black stood erect, and said in a pleasant voice :

“Here is a seat for you, Miss; I don’t reckon these baskets, hats and shawls have paid for their passages,” and she commenced passing over to their rightful owner, on the seat in the rear, the sundry articles particularized.

“I don’t like to be buried before my time,” said the little lady laughingly, looking rather sharply through her glistening, gold-rimmed glasses at the chagrined receivers of their property, and she added :

“It is not fitting, either, that a lady should do penance by standing, in order to accommodate even the king’s luggage.” With this, the little lady, somewhat sharp in feature as in words, nestled down into her corner, white and trembling like a lily amidst her sable weeds.

The people from behind looked daggers at her; and she, in return, gave a searching glance at her side-companion. In one minute she had mercilessly dissected her and pronounced judgment. “A girl of good sense, beautiful without vanity—for a wonder—a commendable amount of pride, decision and cultivation—yes, I like her face; it is a good one—not

one of your mamby-pamby faces, speechless as a china doll's, but a noble face—there's gentleness and resolution combined, a sweet mouth with firmness in the curved lines, a lovely chin, a straight nose, like mine for all the world, if I do say it, and her eyes, they must be charming, shaded by such raven lashes, and overhung by such an exquisitely pencilled arch—ah, a lady every inch of her; one need not look twice to see that"—and Mrs. Lois Mansfield's eyes swayed from the face to the fasty, rich, but plain dress, and were evidently quite as well satisfied with the survey as had they been with that of the stranger's face.

Cecilia, unconscious of this silent scrutiny, commenced recovering from her bewilderment. But to this confusion, which had rendered her temporarily oblivious to her grief, succeeded a complete sense of her isolate desolation. She had never before travelled without Mrs. Leigh or Mark Varnam. The one was dead; the other, she might say, was dead, also. Better had he died loving and blessing her. She was truly alone in the world—the great, bustling, noisy, active world, of which this rushing, roaring train, tearing through cities, across rivers, through mountains and beds of solid granite, was a fit type and emblem. The struggling, striving, crowded world—how, with her wounded heart, could she make her way through it

She stared at the pictured panels, at the style of windows, at the roof, at the many forms before her, each partaking of the unceasing vibration of the maddening train—for if she should close her eyes, she

would burst into sobs ; and she would not yield to tears in presence of this multitude. The will, however, was weaker than nature. Gay ribbons blended with sombre hues, hats, caps and bonnets, men, women and children, all seemed to mingle in one harmonious whole, and poor Cecilia's face fell into her outspread hands, while her whole form shook with the dreaded, ill-suppressed sobs.

The face of the little lady in black lengthened. She resolutely thrust down an emotion which would have culminated in at least a sympathetic sigh and tears, and through her glasses, which must have been magical, took another demure survey of the storm-stricken creature at her side.

“ Poor thing ; she is in trouble. I saw that from the first. Perhaps it is her first great grief, and that is hardest of all to bear. I have said it so many times, and I say it again, though it be ever so wicked, that if I were the good God, I would shelter every poor head from harm, and every poor heart from sorrow. Now I shall have to preach myself a sermon for that. We bring sorrows upon us, ourselves, more or less. We are given certain laws ; if we disobey or disregard them, we suffer the penalty. Suffer just the same, having known or having not known that we were trespassing. It is right we should suffer for our own faults, and it is right, too, we should suffer for the faults of others that necessarily affect us ; right, because we do ; though this latter is more difficult to see and understand. In truth, we are blind as bats, and there

is much more in this life that we understand not, than that we do. Thank God, we have promise of light ahead, when all will be made clear to us; meanwhile we stumble and fall, and hurt ourselves so! Don't, dear, distress yourself so dreadfully." Mrs. Mansfield did not say this audibly, but, looking at Cecilia's shaking form pityingly, silently continued:

"Alas, what poor weak creatures are we; the least wind blows us over, unless, unless indeed, we are anchored upon the one Rock that is sure and steadfast. And many who proudly think themselves anchored, drift helplessly and hopelessly out in the dark at the first cry of 'breakers ahead.'" Mrs. Mansfield's soliloquy came abruptly to a close.

"Your ticket, ladies," aroused the one, and frightened and discomposed the other.

Mrs. Mansfield was instantly in readiness. To her Cecilia whispered, that, having been too late, she failed to procure a ticket. She, however, handed to her her portemonnaie, and would she be so kind as to count out the necessary amount.

"To what point do you wish to go?" enquired Mrs. Mansfield.

Cecilia hesitated a moment; then these words burst forth:

"O, I do not know. I haven't the least idea."

The conductor having left them for a moment, now returned.

"If you will please be so kind, sir, as to come around again after a little," spoke Mrs. Mansfield, so

pleasantly, yet so decidedly, that the gentleman quietly complied.

“My dear,” Mrs. Mansfield, though still more *petite* in figure than Cecilia, was nevertheless forty-five years of age, and could therefore consistently thus address her new acquaintance. “My dear, you are in trouble. I would not be officious, but you must allow me to be your friend. Trust me; I will be your friend. Do you really not know whither you are going?”

“I thought I would go West—the farthest possible I could go; but I had decided upon no definite point. Indeed I have had no time to think—it has been so sudden,” returned Cecilia.

“You would not mind, perhaps, going with me to Minnesota? You will take a ticket to St. Paul. Thence we go by rail to Sauk Rapids, some fifty or a hundred miles, thence onward by stage, or ox-team, or dog-train, to a small town, Kingston by name, at the very point where civilization and barbarism meet. Is that far enough—will you go?”

Cecilia almost smiled through her tears. Yes, it was just the place that would suit her.

Mrs. Mansfield then arranged all with the conductor, counted out the money from the stranger’s purse as unhesitatingly as if it had been her own, and gave it back to the lady, who received it with a hearty “I thank you; you are very, very kind.”

“Have done my duty simply. To have done otherwise would be barbarous, not Christian. I desired you to trust me. That is because I have full faith in

you. We shall be friends now as well as companions during this long journey. I am glad that I have met you; you will prove a comfort to me, and I can do you good."

Instinctively these strangers clasped each other's hands and looked into each other's eyes. There was so much of straight-forwardness, so much quickness of thought and action, so much music as well as decisiveness in the rippling tones of Mrs. Mansfield, that Cecilia became at once warmly attracted and felt a sudden sense of dependence and confidence, which she had but now deemed she could never again experience.

Mrs. Mansfield, though unusually pained and saddened, was quite in her element. She had something to study, to ponder upon, and to investigate; something to occupy her active mind, which, if not diving perpetually into depths, was forever soaring unto lofty heights.

Who could be this young lady, and of what nature the sudden grief which had influenced her to this journey? Beyond question, it was some affair of the heart; and, just as certain, the lady by her side was an innocent victim. Mrs. Mansfield was far from belonging to that class of women who revile and persecute their own sex. She was apt vigorously to maintain that, as a general rule, woman was man's superior in thorough goodness of heart, at least. That, in cases of difference betwixt husband and wife, however much the latter may have been in fault, the

former had still more greatly derelicted. That woman had been instrumental in the fall from innocence, signified very little. If she had not eaten the apple, man would; it could make but trifling difference which partook firstly. Besides, she often averred, as the author of the House of Yorke recently has written—man was made of the slime of the earth, while woman was formed of flesh, having twice known the refining touch of her Creator's hand. Man, by kindness, could elevate woman almost to the angelic; by hardness and cruelty could madden and degrade her to satanism transcending that of her teachers and masters. On the whole, Mrs. Mansfield's opinion of the sterner sex was not of the highest. She never veiled her contempt for those who came not up to her exalted standard. She had plenty of time, as the train thundered onward, to indulge in speculations, and vent stifled indignations against the imaginary personage, who had been the cause of sorrow to the now silent woman by her side.

Her large deep blue eyes gave sundry decided winks and snaps underneath her shiny glasses as she thus mused :

“A married woman, no doubt. A maiden deserted or scorned would have none of this despair; she would be animated either by hope or indignation. This poor child has fallen from the height of happiness to this cruel depth—and some great, strong, wicked man has brought it all about—I wish I could give him a good pinch,” and her taper fingers, clear

and white like wax, worked convulsively. "If five men, good and true, were to save our little planet from destruction, I do believe they couldn't be found. I have never known but two or three in my life; they are all terribly lacking. Talk about woman's vanity! Of course, it is expected of a beautiful woman that she shall be vain, it is a part of her nature, a despicable part, indeed—but then, most men are even vainer than is she; and they all the time flattering themselves that they are above and beyond the least emotion of vanity. Just as though women had no eyes! Many of them have but half an eye, I admit, but that is more than he can properly boast of.

"What a pretty little hand this stranger has, and her foot, I do believe, is scarcely larger than my own. Most persons go distracted over a pretty face, but pretty faces are so common; while a small, delicate hand and foot are so rare. They denote gentility, if aught in the world does"—and she complacently glanced at her own one ungloved hand that rested like a mammoth snow-flake upon the black shawl that lay folded upon her knee. Herein was evinced her vanity, of which she was too active to be unconscious. She quickly raised her hand, and thrust it under the shawl.

"I wonder," she continued, "that my hands or my feet have not been maimed or disfigured long ago. We are not always punished according to our deserts; and it is only in another life that one can attain perfection. Were we perfect here below, we would not

need the cleansing blood that has been shed for us. Is *she* a Church-woman? I don't think she can belong to any of the sects. I always fancy I can detect one of them at first sight. If she knows and loves our "Common Prayer," she has yet a comfort left, though, as yet, she may not have turned to it. First, always, grief must have its way; at length, grief has to yield, for the heart *will* turn aside, seeking rest and comfort somewhere."

Such was the tenor of Mrs. Mansfield's musings, not often interrupted. For purposes of conversation an express-train is far from equal to a quiet parlor; and, unless you have stentorian voices, and are perfectly willing to be overheard, you much prefer silence, even drowsiness, to any continued effort at speech and listening while being whirled along at the rapid rate of thirty miles an hour.

"Supper at this station—thirty minutes."

The hungry multitude arose *en masse*. It had never listened to more delightful words. It stretched its limbs, possessed itself of its staff, or its undiminished, unsustained natural agility, and bounded forward like a pack of school children at the word—dismissed.

Who is not familiar with the peculiarities of such a scene?

Probably, only that proverbial centenarian, who has spent the full measure of his years within his native hamlet, to whom the whistle of the locomotive and the silent speech of the electric wire is but "as a

tale that is told.” After the crowd had mostly passed out, Mrs. Mansfield arose to her feet.

“ You will go with me, and get some refreshments ? ” she said, inquiringly, to her companion. The latter arose for her to pass out, at the same time declaring that she stood in need of nothing; she could not eat.

Mrs. Mansfield urged no farther, but reaching upward, possessed herself of her basket, and quietly passed out.

No sooner had she left, than Cecilia reflected that she had no dinner, and that a long weary night was before her. Had she taken a moment for thought, she would have given the reverse for a decision—a cup of hot drink, she thought, would be grateful, but the idea of food was distasteful.

Not a long time elapsed, however, before Mrs. Mansfield returned; nor was she empty-handed.

Coffee streamed from a china mug which had been abstracted from her basket, and upon a sheet of white paper, drawn from the same source, was the second joint of a masterly chicken, a tempting sandwich, and a sponge cake.

“ See, my dear,” said the little lady to Cecilia, “ what dainties I have brought you. This is the best place to stop at—everything so nice and palatable. You must eat, or you will be sick. This coffee is truly delightful—the best I have ever found while traveling.”

Now, if there was one article of diet for which

Cecilia had a passion, it was coffee. The flavor of this, in its clear white cup of china, aroused her slumbering appetite. She received the offering with thanks, and more truly testified her appreciation by clearing the dishes.

Before this was accomplished, the *all-aboard* had been sounded, and the refreshed multitude, with less of eagerness than had been exhibited in the exodus, had settled down into its former place.

In due time our travelers found themselves at St. Paul. There Mrs. Mansfield would fain have tarried for a few hours, to view the wonders of a western city.

The St. Paul and Pacific, however, was just ready to leave for Sauk Rapids, and as she was anxious soon as possible to meet her son who was expecting her, and probably awaiting her at the last mentioned point, she could afford to make no unnecessary delay.

Arriving at Sauk Rapids, they stood upon the platform of the depot and looked abroad. Small as was the size of the town, it still exceeded their expectations. The terminus of the most northwestern railway should by right be amidst log huts and wigwams. For did not this fierce over-ruler of land and beast make its conquering way unto remotest bounds.

A youth, observing them to be strangers, inquired would they be shown a hotel.

Mrs. Mansfield, too disappointed in not meeting her son, still gave a sweet "I thank you," and with her companion followed the friendly young gentle-

man. Indeed, they stood in no need of a guide, for, passing up on Broadway, the "Russell House," spacious, marvelously white, with a hint of coolness in its multitudinous green blinds, stood conspicuously in view.

To Mrs. Mansfield's anxious inquiry, was replied that nothing had been seen or heard of her son.

"He may be down in the evening stage," suggested the proprietor of this house, that had a most neat and inviting appearance. "The stage goes up at two; the down-stage will reach here at five. You might miss each other; though, of course, it is for you to decide," continued Mr. Carpenter.

There was no alternative; Mrs. Mansfield decided to remain over. After partaking of a good dinner, the ladies adjourned to the parlor, and were soon joined by several who were evidently boarders. A handsome Steinway piano lay open, and one after another gave creditable performance. Our strangers being invited, Mrs. Mansfield hesitated not in taking her place, when she rendered a master-piece to the delight of her audience. She was pressed to continue, until piece after piece flowed from beneath her fingers, that seemed gifted with enchantment.

At length she made way for Cecilia; but poor Cecilia decidedly excused herself. She was a dear lover of music, and an accomplished performer; but how could she touch the keys, when he who had been accustomed to stand by her side, appreciatively, was lost to her forever?

Almost overpowered by the violence of her emotions, she was about to withdraw, when an elderly lady, whom she had heard addressed as "Aunt Hannah," drew her chair nearer and commenced conversation. At first, Cecilia was annoyed and begirt herself with reserve. There was something, however, so very friendly in the manner, and so very good in the expression of this person, as completely to disarm Cecilia of her reluctance.

Nay, she began to regard this lady with interest. She may have been seventy, wore brown hair and a cap of black lace; her face, which sometime must have been fair and beautiful, was freckled, though not wrinkled, and a look beamed forth from the bright-hazel eyes that told of a sunny spirit, and the kindest nature. She was a maiden lady, but not a particle old-maidish. A child is not more easy and full of grace; a queen not more gracious and condescending.

"What good people the world holds, after all our talk about its folly and wickedness," exclaimed Cecilia mentally, while regarding admiringly her *vis-a-vis* companion. At the same time she listened not so much at what was said, as she was beguiled by the manner of its saying. For it always happened, that when Miss Hannah talked she made a thorough business of it; she was a chatter-box, which term in her case is synonymous with music-box, and one had only to listen and admire; she, literally, commanded both eye and ear.

Presently, Mrs. Mansfield interrupted the *tete-a-tete*, by taking Cecilia's arm and leading her to their room.

"What a charming old lady! I could have listened to her for hours. I would think her to have been reared in a court—a court of elegance, virtue and love. I have had a horror of growing old, but the presence of such a dainty old lady as this makes age positively charming."

This was spoken by Cecilia, with much of her old-time enthusiasm.

"Indeed, I did not particularly observe her. She must be extraordinary, however, to have so aroused and won your attention. I was occupied with the others, and I must confess to an utter astonishment in finding here such civilized people. Only think! A splendid Steinway, in an elegant parlor, in a really pretty country hotel—and ladies and gentlemen too! Well, this *is* a great country—but I do not feel at all that I am in the boundless West. Where is the wilderness, where the smoking wigwams, where the howl of the wolf—the trail of the hunters. Come, let us go out in the suburbs; possibly we may find yet some trace of nature and barbarism, some hint of a covert or corner, answering to the aspiration :

'O, for a lodge in some vast wilderness!'"

Before Mrs. Mansfield had finished her speech, her traveling hat had been donned, and with Cecilia she was descending the stairs.

“What! going already,” exclaimed Aunt Hannah, who stood radiant at the foot of the stairs, which she had been about to ascend.

“Sight-seeing only. Shall we be repaid, think you?”

“Yes, I think so,” she replied promptly. “A dam is being constructed across the Mississippi; a grand work it is. It is to develop a splendid water-power; if you have taste that way, you can visit the granite quarries—just back on Grand street; and if you ascend the bluff, you will have a fine view of the river and of St. Cloud just below us on the west side—there, you can see it from here,” going with them to the door. The ladies looked as directed, and were surprised to behold stone and brick edifices, and several spires uprising like sentinel guards over the whole.

“And what is the name of this street?” questioned Mrs. Mansfield.

“O, this is Broadway,” quoth Aunt Hannah merrily. “Our little burg was ambitious from her start, and she is not the only infant city that rejoices in pretentious names. St. Cloud yonder—you see she was royal even in her christening—has her St. Germain, her Washington avenue, and her Percy place. Towns, like people, affect lordly titles—and why not, if it does them any good?”—and with a beaming smile, the kind-hearted soul went up her way. Such a soul as hers is forever going up, until it lands, finally, thank God, in the blest abode of infinite peace.

Turning the corner of the hotel, and walking straight up to Grand street, Mrs. Mansfield espied a small brown church still back on the corner of another street.

“There! there’s my church,” cried she, with delight. “Yes, my own dear, dear little church; found its way hither with everything else”—and she quickened her steps, that she might stand within its sacred shadow.

“Why, this is an Episcopal church, is it not?” inquired Cecilia, as they arrived nigh, and she observed it more closely.

“Yes, an Episcopal church certainly; else it would not be mine.”

“But—pardon me—I thought you said you were a Catholic?”

“Catholic—and so I am—but not *Roman* Catholic. Dear me! What an impression you must have gained of me. No, I have not yielded up my senses so far as to have become a worshiper of the Virgin, or a devotee to saints and dead men’s bones. I am a Catholic in the true sense of the word.” She spoke with emphasis, as if expecting contradiction.

“But not in the generally accepted sense. You see, I myself failed to comprehend you. Then, too, the cross on your prayer book, and the cross you constantly wear attached to your chain, contributed to mislead me,” urged Cecilia.

“Very naturally. But the cross is Christ’s, not Rome’s. May I ask what is your religious belief?”

"I really cannot say," said Cecilia simply and lowly, and she remained silent.

Mrs. Mansfield regarded her pityingly, then ascended the steps. Trying the door, she found it locked.

"Locked, as I supposed," she said. "It is such a pity that our churches could not be left open. That is one thing I like the Romanists for; one can always go in their churches and kneel before the altar. I would so like to go in, and in that holy place thank God for my safe journey, for my finding of you, dear Cecilia, and to pray God's blessing on my boy, whose failure to meet me renders me anxious."

. Coming down the flight of brown wooden steps, she glanced upward, paused for a moment, and said fervently :

"God bless all those dear ones whose steps come up hither."

Having admired the tasty school edifice, which stood upon the opposite corner, and which, from its size and comeliness, cast the modest brown church quite in the shade, they ascended the bluff, whence they indeed beheld the enchanting prospect which had been promised them. From this point, obtaining a good view of the water-power improvements, they resolved to make a visit thither. They were well repaid. Though accustomed to Eastern works done on a grand scale, this appeared by no means inconsiderable.

Walking out upon high, wide walls of cemented granite, into the middle of the grand father of waters, and beholding about them continued lines of solid masonry firmly constructed upon native beds of granite, they were filled with amazement, and became fully convinced that the "Glorious West" was not undeserving her proud cognomen.

While still standing upon one of the piers, they were met by the handsome proprietor of the Russell House. He addressed them some commonplace remark, then introduced to them a gentleman by his side as Mr. Russell, the oldest settler of the town, in whose honor its finest hotel had been named. He was really a man of sixty, although he would have passed for ten years younger.

"You have a beautiful site for a town, and decided advantage for growth and prosperity," remarked Mrs. Mansfield.

Mr. Russell looked very kindly at the lady. His cheek flushed and his eye kindled. She had touched upon the one subject that lay near his heart.

"You think so? Well, it appears to me that is what a stranger would naturally say. We have a splendid water-power, as you can see. Men of capital have it in hand. Just let us get plenty of machinery for all kinds of manufactories;" and he went on to enumerate, "and it will not be very long before we will have quite a city. It is but a question of time. Minneapolis grew very rapidly, wholly on account of its water-power. For various and obvious

reasons, ours is superior. The foundations, we may say, are everlasting; while those of Minneapolis are crumbling every year, and require immense expenditure of capital even for temporary preservation. You see just above," pointing his finger northwestward, "the Sauk River flows into the Mississippi. The land on either side of that river is exceedingly fertile, and is entirely settled, mostly by German farmers. All that is tributary to this point. When our free bridge is built, as is intended, across here where we stand, we will get all the trade from that region of country. Then we have a fertile country back of us fast settling with thrifty farmers; our stone quarries, three of which are being worked, must prove eventually a source of great revenue."

Mrs. Mansfield listened attentively, and, as he paused for breath, remarked:

" You are evidently correct, sir; I hope you will live to behold your anticipations realized. I am surprised to find civilization and progress making such strides in regions so remote. St. Cloud," which was in good view, "is a large village; what has contributed to her growth?"

" Well, she has really grown under false pretences. The truth is, we knew that the natural point was at this place, and being sober, quiet people, thought it would grow naturally and spontaneously. St. Cloud sprang up, published to the world that she had the water-power, stone-quarries, all the good farming land was adjacent to her, and by constant bold per-

severance in such assertions, perhaps came actually to have faith in them, and to beat the faith into others. She worked well, and got splendidly paid for it. She is a smart little place; eventually she will form a suburb to Sauk Rapids. Most people prophesy the town will grow downward, though I am not altogether of that opinion—it will grow up as well”—and he glanced upward, where his own broad lots and acres extended as far as the eye could see. He *wished* it to grow in that direction; that wish had become father to the faith.

Somewhat more was said upon the same subject, after which Cecilia, who had been engaged in desultory conversation with Mr. Carpenter, came up with Mrs. Mansfield, and they returned to the hotel.

“Do you observe,” remarked the elder lady, “how happy everybody looks about here, what cheerful faces they wear, and so youthful and fresh? I shall write this down as the American ‘vale of Arcadia. De Soto and the others failed to find the long sought fountain of youth, simply because they came not up far enough. Is it in the atmosphere, or what?”

Just here, at the steps of the hotel, they were met by a person who handed them a letter. The stage from Brainerd had just come in. The presiding genius of the post-office, being a lady, was quick-witted enough to forward at once a missive addressed to a stranger at the Russell House, particularly as it was winged by—in haste.

It was to Mrs. Lois Mansfield, and *not* in the hand-writing of her son.

"Herbert is sick—O, I feared as much!"—and she tore open the envelope. Yes, he was sick—threatened with typhoid fever, and hoped his mother would hasten to him without delay.

Such was the purport of the brief epistle.

"Without delay!" As if a mother needs any such injunction for flying to her child, be he sick or well. Twenty-one hours must elapse before the journey could be attempted. How weary and long they were to the anxious mother, we need not undertake to say. But there cometh an end to all, whether or not desirable; and our travelers, in due time, found themselves in a Concord coach, rolling over the prairies, through the small towns of Watab, Sevan River, Little Falls, Belle Prairie, Fort Ripley and Crow Wing, while at about midnight they landed at the new, bright and shiny, though wicked town of Brainerd. Neither Mrs. Mansfield, however, or Cecilia Leigh knew or cared aught about the epithets appropriate to the friendly place, which provided them with a warm supper and comfortable shelter.

At early dawn they took the Duluth train, and were whirled off rapidly into the mazes of regions which ordinary chroniclers may be excused from describing, since it is presumable that, at heart, they would be forced to draw upon fancy. At all events, after a few hours they were set down at the place of destination, Kingston by name.



CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW LIFE.

KINGSTON rightfully boasted of a thousand inhabitants, the first of whom had here constructed his shanty of logs three or four years previously. That she had a thousand to-day, was no sign that next month, or next year, she would not have a story to tell of quadruple the number. There is no dependence to be placed upon present calculations in such matters. A western city springs up, much like a mushroom; often it grows unto beautiful proportions; oftener, is dwarfed and blighted; oftenest, is nipped in the bud.

According to prophecies of her proprietors, Kingston was to attain unto royalty of fame and grandeur befitting her name. She had already saw-mills and grist-mills, an overplus of stores and of artificers in the trades, a sufficiency of hotels and churches, and eleven saloons. We are particular to precisely enumerate the latter that each and all may be satisfied that so thriving a town is well provided for, at least in one respect. There was one small school house; another in process of erection. Now and then, a lady had been employed from three to six months in the year—but really the children had been so few,

and the difficulty of procuring good teachers had been so great, that the matter of school had been very much neglected.

There were grounds for these apologies, it is true. The children had been comparatively few, inasmuch as the people were mostly young and their families of a tender age. Also, even though a teacher had come all the way from the East, with a promise to teach a twelvemonth, scarcely a third of that time would elapse when some enterprising but lonely young bachelor would induce her to change her vocation.

Thus had the subject of schools awaited some revivifying influence, when Mark Varnam's sin, by permission of Providence, sent Cecilia Leigh unto Kingston.

Nearly all of her pocket-money had been consumed for her journey. Should no opening for a school appear at Kingston, she would be obliged to go elsewhere, thereby compelling a separation from her new and dear friend.

It was to relieve herself of this anxiety, therefore, that she early made inquiry as to the prospect of success. Becoming favorably assured upon this point, she rested easily as to the future, and gave all her time to her friend, sharing with her a constant attention upon her sick son.

And Herbert Mansfield truly needed such ministering care. He was very, very ill. The fever had become settled, and must run its course. Days and

nights he was watched anxiously. Constantly his mother stood by him, but he knew her not. Yet, in delirium her name was on his lips, called tenderly, entreatingly.

The crisis came, and with but little hope. "He was the only child of his mother, and she a widow."

At college, he had graduated with honor; at law school, with credit; and, full of enthusiasm and ambition, had come out West, fired with the full determination of becoming, at length, Governor, Senator—at least, something great. He had been one year at Kingston. It was his first separation from his beloved mother. She had boarded near him at Yale, during his whole collegiate and legal courses. He had entered upon a good practice in his profession, and built a neat little cottage, which was to be his mother's home and his own thenceforth.

And now, in the early promise of his manhood—he was but twenty-three—apparently he lay upon the brink of the grave. And was this the end of all his aspirations? Must he die and make no sign? Could he do naught for his sweet mother but die and leave her broken-hearted?

"O God, mysterious are Thy ways, and past finding out!"

"If he dies, I cannot live," said Mrs. Mansfield to Cecilia. "He is my all—my good, my precious boy. Never have I turned my eyes off from him that I have not prayed 'God bless him.' God *would* bless him most truly, to take him to Himself. And God

knows best; the dear, good God, who can do nothing ill—but yet I cannot bear it. In all your trouble, whatever it may have been, you can have known nothing like this—the death of an only child!"

Cecilia visibly trembled, as Mrs. Mansfield threw herself into her arms. Her voice sounded cold and unnatural as she said, with forced calmness:

"I have seen my only child grow white, cold and dead. It was very sad and dreadful—but not the worst—O no, not the worst."

The last words came out with a wail, and were followed by a convulsion of sobs.

"O, my friend, forgive me. I have been cold and heartless. I have not sympathized with any *such* grief. I only thought—ah, I know not what I thought—but I am lost in conjecture! What can be, could be, worse! O Herbert, my child, my precious boy!"

Mrs. Mansfield returned alone to the sick-room, and knelt by her unconscious son. The doctor stood by, intent and anxious. Life was, indeed, flickering—but, thank God, it did not go out. No; it revived, gently and feebly, and Herbert Mansfield gained a new lease of life. He did not die. The widow's son was restored to life. Though no one saw "Jesus passing by," nor heard the words "Herbert, come forth," He may have looked pityingly upon that kneeling mother who, with faith, called Him imploringly to have mercy upon her, and He must have spoken the blessed words that gave her back her son.

Soon after Herbert commenced convalescing, Cecilia opened school—at first, in the small house, as the newer and larger one would not be completed for a month or two. The first morning, she looked about her with dismay. Upward of fifty children, most of them between the ages of five and ten, huddled close together on account of limited space, stared at her with eager, curious eyes. Here was no lack of material for a school, to be sure; but all at once came over Cecilia, for the first time in her life, a consciousness of her own insufficiency. She sighed as she silently repeated the moan of Fanny Forrester over her fatherless children: “Poor things, to have no other guide but me.”

“While darkly groping for my lost faith, mayhap these little ones may help me to find it. May God help me to find, and may the sweet Mother of Grace, so dear to the Catholic heart, pray for and assist me!”

Care of a school was new work for Cecilia. Indeed, to labor, as such, she was unaccustomed. She had been reared, if not in affluence, at least in plenty of wealth for elegant comfort. However, she was by nature industriously disposed, and had wasted no time in idle triflings. Still, it was one thing to be at liberty to think, read, write—to find all social privileges at command; and quite another, that liberty being denied her, to spend her days in the school-room, with fifty children more or less stupid or untractable.

At the expiration of the first day, Cecilia returned to her room almost disheartened. How was she to endure the noise and confusion day after day? Better thoughts, however, soon took place of murmuring. Had she not greatly desired the position of teacher? Did she wish to resign? Why, then, complain? Was not the old life gone and the new begun? And had she not anticipated that this latter was to be harsh and unlovely? And yet, she had resolved to bear it—and, by the help of God, she would bear it bravely. There it was again. She was utterly weak, unless God would help her. There was fresh help in the aspiration to that source of strength. By degrees she became calm and submissive. She resolved no one should ever hear her make complaint. Silently she would suffer, and, perhaps, grow strong.

God was, indeed, speaking to the soul of Cecilia, although she knew it not. In striving to accept cheerfully her condition as it had now become, she failed to perceive that the harsh condition was itself a punishment for the sins of her life. Through the fiery furnace though she had passed, the fine gold of her nature had not become sufficiently refined for the Master's use. The divine light had not so illumined the recesses of her conscience as to enable her to perceive how far she had been led astray. Had this come upon her at once, she would have reeled beneath the comprehension. A clearer perception of God's laws which her husband had outraged, a better

understanding of the moral code to which the true heart of society is loyal, would be sure to dawn upon her in her new life; and, just as sure, would she weep and blush for the past, and cleave to the new-learned lesson.

Mark Varnam had been a popular writer, and Cecilia had written articles which even his critical taste had commended. To occupy her mind, while disengaged from school duties, she resolved to continue contributions to one or two of the periodicals for which he, and herself also, had habitually written. Thus would she sternly secure herself against intruding memories. If "Satan finds some mischief still" *only* "for idle hands to do," then was she guarded against that enemy's approach.





CHAPTER V.

SOCIETY AT KINGSTON.

AFTER a time, however, Cecilia was not permitted to make this exclusive disposition of herself. Mrs. Mansfield, with her usual dictatorial tone, protested against it. This little personage of importance was herself again. She commenced to reign in her cottage, very soon after Herbert was able to sit up. She thought the change would do him good; she was right. She was sure it would do herself good; there she was correct again. She had another idea, which was a continued one, however, and that was that the house would not be complete until Cecilia should be domiciled in the low front chamber. This duly came to pass, when Mrs. Mansfield rested satisfied for a few days. She had been so fortunate as to secure the services of the most famously good servant in town, which fact must be attributed to her tact, will and management. Mrs. Mansfield would have made a good prime minister, though she was not wily, and was too conscientious to be always political. But she could outmaneuvre a Talleyrand, a Richelieu, or a Mazarin, and through what well-arranged disguises could she not have pierced?

Mrs. Mansfield was fond of society, and she received her visitors so cordially and graciously as made them well pleased to repeat their civilities. Nor would she allow Cecilia to remain "buried" in her chamber.

"One owes duties to society," she would say. "We are not moles, nor owls, nor intended to be solitary. And though society in Kingston—ah, I must bite my lips. The little time I have been here, I cannot count the times that I have heard this one, and that one, and the other complain about 'the society not being what they were used to.' I mark such persons. They are the very ones who have risen above their former level, and assume airs. So, Cecilia dear, whatever you and I may say, *entre nous*, our lips must be sealed to others about the low condition of society. We are not bound to take every one to our heart. But we can treat all kindly. There are few persons who have not good points. And I really think we may find, even here in Kingston, agreeable, intelligent people whom it may be a pleasure to meet, and for whom we may form a sincere friendship."

Notwithstanding such good-natured homilies as the above, Mrs. Mansfield, so strong was her sense of the ludicrous, might the next hour be laughing merrily over some *lapsus linguae*, or *faux pas*, or even comic costume of some innocent visitor, who, far from supposing herself the subject of jest, had gone away delighted with the "charming Mrs. Mansfield."

Did we all know what was said of us, even by our

best friends, would we have a friend? We go on smiling at people, who have literally stabbed us in the back. This does not so much matter, to us, at least, if we have not lanced those who smile at us. Yet, who does not believe pure friendship to exist—and for him?

Among the first ladies of Kingston to call upon our strangers, were the wives of the law-firm of Gough and Adair. Not at the same time and together. No; for, because Gough and Adair admirably did business together year in and year out, and were really quite good friends, it did not follow that Mrs. Gough and Mrs. Adair were on intimate terms, or that their mutual antipathy did not openly display itself.

Mrs. Gough was the senior of the two, and an inch and a-half taller, by actual measurement. This extra height was confined principally to the slender neck unconscionably extended, even to deformity; and would have been so deemed, had not the owner of the aforesaid cervical fixture somewhere read that most celebrated beauties possessed long, graceful, swan-like necks. If the Cleopatras, the Anne Boleyns, the Maries Queens of Scots, etc., rejoiced in such disfigurement, why should not Mrs. Permelia Gough, who, though she hoped never to be insane enough to poison herself with an asp, nor to be brought ignominiously to the block, had still an ambition to live in the annals of Kingston, as its feminine sage, its beauty, and its queen.

As to her wisdom, she had not even passed the threshold of that fane wherein she might behold the immensities of knowledge, and the boundlessness of her own ignorance. One has acquired the A B C of learning, when he learns that he knows nothing. Mrs. Permelia Gough had never gone thus far. Yet she spoke of Butler's Analogy, of Paley's Theology, and of Kame's Elements, and looked wise at vacant walls and into empty space. As to her beauty, she had none; it was all in her eye. She was neither a brunette nor a blonde. She had features neither striking nor pretty. Her face, as well as her figure, was full of angularities, without a particle of grace, either in movement or repose. Yet was she fully possessed with the ever-conscious idea that she was the envy and admiration of every beholder. Every person is said to have his own pet idea. Mrs. Gough's pet idea was this foolish vanity, and she as jealously guarded her assumed rights as though she had been enthroned princess of the virtues. Disdain and contempt she threw upon that person who failed to treat her with ostentatious deference.

Quite the reverse was Mrs. Frances Adair. She had a fair, pleasant face, sweet and innocent in expression. Her brown hair was ever nicely, becomingly arranged; her dress, however rich or poor, ever plain and simple, fitted nicely her pretty figure. By no means remarkable for her grace or beauty, she yet attracted by her modesty, simplicity and kindly nature. Though quiet and reserved, she had no lack

of penetration. She read character well, and from her background had rather a fondness for studying human nature. Like Mrs. Mansfield, she possessed a lively sense of the ridiculous, and had many a laugh "all to herself," as she glanced here and there into souls that would have been startled at her divining thought.

The first time Mrs. Gough bowed low her be-dizzened head to the lady of her husband's partner, she did it with infinite hauteur, resolved upon producing a profound impression. She instinctively regarded her as a rival, and figuratively put her foot upon her at the very first interview.

"A milk-and-water affair, that I need not fear in the least," soliloquized Mrs. Gough as she again profoundly bowed herself out of the presence.

"Pride, covetousness, anger—shall I go on and finish up the seven deadly sins, adding thereto weakness, vanity, selfishness and all self-righteousness and unrighteousness?" Such was Mrs. Adair's mental summing up of Mrs. Gough, as she watched that lady's retreating figure, whose red ribbons, from crown to toe, fluttered out frantically to meet the caressing wind.

Mrs. Adair was patient, gentle and good. Upon occasion, she could also be indulgent, impetuous and self-asserting.

She wished to give due courtesy to all; it was her right to receive the same. She perceived that Mrs. Gough aspired to rule Kingston; that through mere assumption she had nearly gained her point.

“Mrs. Gough will find one who will not become her subject,” she declared emphatically. And, indeed, Mrs. Gough had reason to change her mind; Mrs. Adair was not the yielding simpleton she had supposed. Mrs. Adair dared to meet unflinchingly her haughty disdain, her most supercilious frown. To her *ipse dixit*, Mrs. Adair dared affirm a contrary.

It was in the “Sewing Society” that these two opposite elements met and rebounded most often. Until Mrs. Adair’s debut, it had been:

“Do you not think so, Mrs. Gough? Mrs. Gough, is it not so and so? Would it not be better to have it this way, or that way?—Mrs. Gough said so. Mrs. Gough was the alpha and omega, and, for that matter, the beta, gamma, delta, and all the rest.

And now, to Mrs. Gough it was excessively annoying for Mrs. Adair, looking so meek and innocent, to insist firmly upon her own view of things, setting completely at naught the opinions of one who had indisputably reigned for more than a twelvemonth. But nations revolutionize; why not societies and individuals? In the beginning, indeed, Mrs. Gough had found a formidable rival in the person of Mrs. Roxana Carter. Mrs. Carter had the advantage of being almost the oldest settler: although in years she was many years the junior of Mrs. Gough. She was a showy, fine-looking woman, fond of dress and admiration, completely worldly and unprincipled. For a time she disputed Mrs. Gough’s ascendancy,

setting herself in array against her encroachments. She discovered, however, by degrees, that she really had no occasion to regard the imperious intruder as an enemy. The ambitions of the two soared in different directions.

The lawyer's lady loved power, and, while deficiently educated, aspired to be esteemed literary. But her realm was a feminine one. It was only among those of her own sex that she felt most at home, and over whom she would hold sway. Whether it was because her charms were not such as recommend themselves to gentlemen, and she found herself repulsed by them, or because she was herself unattracted, certain it was she cared nothing whatever for their attentions or opinions. The wonder was how she ever condescended to become Mrs. Gough. However, having become such, her liege lord filled all the space she had to devote to the sterner sex. They were all as naught to her. Had the world suddenly been bereft of every male descendant of Adam except Jerome Gough, this unsusceptible lady would not have heaved a sigh. No star would have darkened in her horizon. Her husband was her grand, sun; from him she borrowed light to shine as the less resplendent moon; what cared she for lesser luminaries? She gloried in lighting up the sewing circle, and sailing serenely as queen over and through every little tea-party and social gathering. She was vain, proud and self-sufficient; she prided herself upon strict honesty, untarnished virtue and perfect in-

tegrity. She truly, fully believed no woman of her acquaintance to be so wise, so good, so competent as herself. She walked upon hidden stilts; was it not, therefore, easy for her to witness the shortcomings, the follies, the vices of her less elevated companions?

On the contrary, Mrs. Carter's grand passion was love of admiration. Nature had given her a handsome face—or, what would be termed beauty by common, undiscriminating minds. It lacked that delicacy and refinement so essential to a cultivated taste; and yet it passed for beauty among the masculine portion of Kingston. She was free and independent in manner; gay, witty, even saucy in speech; in every crowd her voice was loudest, her laugh the merriest.

Mrs. Carter's husband being almost continually absent in the pineries or among the Indians, she had free scope for her frivolities and flirtations. Seeing, then, that her rival, Mrs. Gough, had not the faintest desire to contend with herself in her chosen role of bringing all the Mark Antonies to her feet, she yielded up to her the more burdensome honors, wherein only ladies were concerned, and this the more willingly since she could not fail to observe her own waning popularity and the turn of the tide toward the new-comer.

Between Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Adair, however, came no intimacy. These ladies were mutual repellents. The one regarded Mrs. Adair as a weak-minded woman, unconscious of personal charms

which might be used to advantage, and which *she*, at least, would not aid in setting forth.

Mrs. Adair, with her calm, penetrating eye, but too clearly saw the meretricious character of the other. She could entertain no respect, nor even a show of it, to one who stepped to the very verge of decorum, and unblushingly tempted young men to the fatal step.

It might be expected that the three minister's wives would figure conspicuously in Kingston society.

The Presbyterian's lady, mother of five boys, had lived so many years as missionary's wife among the Indians as to have lost all relish for society. She very rarely went out. The Methodist's lady, besides being an invalid, had a large family, no help, and was endowed with poverty. Moreover, being obliged to move every year or two, she thought it not worth while to go into society.

The Baptist minister had no wife; at least it was lawful so to state. Mr. Marston had but just landed at Kingston, successor of Rev. Mr. Green, who for a year had filled the pulpit. Mr. Green had had a wife, but, of course, he took her with him, or rather, she took him. She was prime mover in the removal. She had quarrelled with Mrs. Carter, and about a very delicate matter; for which reason it had been thought best by all concerned, deacons included, that a change should be made. Whether this change proved beneficial, the sequel will show.

The Doctor's wife, Mrs. Stone, was so quiet, inoffensive, and staid so close at home, engrossed with her first baby, that little was said of her. She never talked against her neighbor, eschewing gossip altogether. She did not stop to think but that all the Kingston ladies were good and perfect—she was so good herself, and so thoroughly content and happy within her own little world ; was it not the same outside ?





CHAPTER VI.

MEETING AND CHURCH.

ALTHOUGH many of the Kingston ladies had called upon Mrs. Mansfield during her son's sickness, with kind assurances of sympathy, it was only Mrs. Adair who had often repeated the visit, and whose offered services had been more than once accepted.

Mrs. Mansfield and Mrs. Adair became at once friends, from the fact that both were, as they termed themselves, "church-women." Otherwise, too, they harmonized. Together they mingled their regrets that there was no "church" at Kingston. True, the Romanists had a small church at "Dublin," as the southern suburb of the town was denominated. There Herbert Mansfield had been in the habit of attending service. For, accustomed to the Episcopal form, he could better endure the unintelligible ceremony of the Mass than the vacuity, the terrible nothingness of the sects. From this circumstance, he had gradually formed the acquaintance of the priest, and first from curiosity, then from interest, had studied the history and spirit of the Church.

Herbert had now become able to leave his room, and called himself well, though his pallid face and

attenuated form denied his assertion. He was able to talk, however, and seemed determined to make up for lost time. His mother laughingly declared that the strength from his lost hair had gone to his tongue.

On Saturday, Mrs. Mansfield, her son, Cecilia and Mrs. Adair were pleasantly conversing in the sitting-room. A gentle rain was falling, and more than once congratulations were made that callers would be unlikely to intrude. The conversation naturally drifted to religious matters. Mrs. Mansfield was in a query. As yet she had entered no meeting-house on the Sunday. She really did not think she ought to do so, and yet to spend Sunday at home seemed so unnatural. Mrs. Adair, after having been the rounds, as she affirmed, had taken to reading her prayers at home. By adopting this course, she had not such revolting reflections and religious disturbance to contend with as was sure to follow her attendance at any one of the meetings.

Yielding to the lulling influence of the music of the rain, and sensible of a congeniality with her companions, Cecilia detailed her experience for the last three Sundays. Without intending to make a speech, in fact having no intent or forethought in the matter, she commenced in a cheerful tone of voice:

“I was never at a meeting, so-called, a dozen times in my life. Yet I was not without early religious training. Of that I may not speak now. Suffice it to say, my influences and surroundings were of such a

nature as to have quite supplanted youthful impressions. I have read the Bible just as I have read the Koran, or as my own classical text-books, for worldly instruction and amusement. Within the last few weeks"—here she bravely conquered her faltering voice, "I have felt inclined to make a study of this strange religion which appears to fill up so much of many people's lives. Three weeks ago to-morrow, I went to the Presbyterian house. The weather was warm; I went in in a perspiration; I came out with a chill. It seemed unnatural, and like anything else but devotion, to remain sitting while the God of Heaven is being addressed. I did not glance about me. Maybe the audience—I could scarcely call them worshippers—felt devout in their hearts. I looked at the minister, who stood erect in his pulpit, and then at the roof above him, wondering if his many-worded prayer was gaining the ear of the Infinite.

"He prefaced his sermon by remarking that, as he had understood his brethren of other denominations had been loudly crying down 'infant baptism,' as well as attacking the established method of baptism in their own church, namely, by sprinkling, he, in order to confirm the faith of his brethren, would take the subject of baptism for his text. Whereupon he took up the Greek word *baptizo*, and read from the lexicon its various renderings. This much was against him, for, to dip, to plunge and to immerse are the first synonyms given. In translating from

a language, it is customary to take the first renderings for the usual and most peculiar meanings of the foreign word. Indeed, I followed him closely, and from the course of his arguments, became convinced that his final conclusion was a forced one; possible, it is true, but that his brethren, as he called them, had the advantage clearly upon their own side. Such was my disinterested opinion; and I had followed him closely and listened with interest. Upon the subject of infant baptism, too, he brought no support for it from his Bible. It was only to be inferred. Here, again, he but proved his opponents to be in the right. If he had nothing stronger to bring forth from his sole instructor—the Book of Books—he demolished himself with his own arguments.

“As you will recollect, it became noised abroad that Mr. Barry’s sermon had been repeated to the new Baptist minister, and that this latter gentleman had given out that his third sermon in Kingston would be a refutation of his reverend brother’s assertions and contortions of Scripture. At the hotel table, numerous remarks were made, and quite a feast anticipated—more particularly, as Mr. Marston was judged to be impetuous and fiery. As I had resolved to become a hearer as well as a seeker of the truth on that day, I formed one of his large congregation. Now, the Presbyterian minister is an educated man, a deep thinker and a logical reasoner. Had not the doctrines of infant baptism, and particularly sprinkling, been born with him, as it were,

growing with his growth and strengthening with his strength, he would have seen at once the fallacy of his reasoning.* Regarding the subjects in dispute as fixed facts, about which there *could* be no caviling, he was self-blinded, and unable to perceive the falsity of his premises.

“Mr. Marston is a very different man. He is uneducated, boisterous, rude, yet so full of conceit as to assume that he and his word should become dominant over all around. His arguments, as he termed them, were a mere jumble of words, put together without order or coherency. He was not satisfied with having gained his point, as he observed, but fell to vituperating his opponent, as endeavoring to throw dust in people’s eyes, and a wolf to draw lambs from the fold. He became very vehement, waxed strong in wrath, and beat with his fists the sacred desk, the holy book, tearing off with angry fingers the cushion’s fringe, and polluting with angry breath the very air around him. His whole discourse closed in ‘sound and fury, signifying nothing !’ Yet, would you have believed it ? At the dinner-table Mr. Marston’s effort of the morning was pronounced masterly, his opponent of the previous Sunday deemed utterly annihilated ! But what can one expect ? ‘Figs of thorns, or grapes of thistles ?’

“Next was to come the Methodist minister’s championship. He had let fall, here and there, sundry hints that he was about to annihilate both Presbyterian and Baptist. Doubtless he thought he ac-

complished his purpose, for he was at infinite pains to prove that both were right and both were wrong—the Methodists combined all the right to be found in the two sects, having discarded all the wrong. For ages and ages, he asserted, peoples and nations had practiced infant baptism. There was really no harm in it, and since the Bible did not forbid it, let those still believe in it and practice it who might wish. And as to the method of baptism, it did not much matter. For his own part, he believed in going down into the water; but since many very good Methodists believed in sprinkling, why, let them have their own way. Some very timid persons were afraid of immersion; afraid of strangling or drowning; had nothing whatever of the nature of ducks; one person he could then call to mind, a very nice young lady, pious and worthy, who did not believe in sprinkling—she believed in going the whole figure or none—so, as she was afraid to go down into the water, and declared she would not, the only thing to be done was to receive her into the Church without baptism, except, mind ye, *except* baptism of the spirit, which, after all, my friends,' he continued, 'is the best baptism. I took her into the church, giving her the right hand of fellowship upon her simple declaration that she had been baptized with the spirit. Ah, Methodism is a happy, glorious term. It has different ways for different persons. It is impossible for all people to think alike. You are not like me, nor am I like you. No two people have the same views

of things. It is folly to talk of bringing everybody to think alike in religion. You might as well think of bringing the tall and the short of stature to fit the same procrustean bed that we read of. Such a thing is not expected, thank God. We have all His blessed Book, and we can read it and make up our own minds with regard to it, and then we can join whichever Church we think best; but the Methodist seems to suit the most people, because it is most liberal—its line is not so straight and unbending—it encloses both the immersionist and sprinkler—it receives the infant, or not, just as the parent chooses—it believes in free-will pretty generally, though I, for my part, don't scruple to receive the foreordinationist and the electionist—but there, that will do," and Cecilia laughed and drew breath.

"You had better be employed by these ministers to take notes," said Mrs. Adair.

"You are not going to close your report so abruptly as this? You will not say you came away from a Methodist meeting without having been invited to the mourner's bench?" questioned Mrs. Mansfield, looking very searchingly at Cecilia through her highly polished glasses.

"Well, that last portion of the services I did not at all understand," replied Cecilia, more reticently.

"So you allowed yourself to be dragged forward, did you, for a spectacle?"

"It was all new to me, you must remember. I saw no mourner's bench, although the minister did

allude to that article, saying it was a great stumbling block to sinners, and that the impenitent were afraid and ashamed of it—but he assured them that if they came not to it, it would eventually, in the hereafter, overwhelm them and grind them to powder. It would assume the form of an accusing spirit. It would be a sword above their heads, a vulture at their heart, an undying worm in their souls. He did not tell where it was, nor could I gain the least idea. At the close, however, he became distressingly excited, and after a very deafening, and, to me, unintelligible harangue, invited all in that dying congregation, who hoped or even wished to go to Heaven, to stand upon their feet.

“A general uprising ensued simultaneously with a universal amen. Clapping of hands and shouts of glory filled the room. Shrieks and groans filled the air, the crowd swayed to and fro, while the stentorian tones of the preacher were now and then fearfully audible, like the reverberating thunder amidst the storm-tossed forest.

“My first feeling had been that of disgust; this rapidly changed to terror and awe. I shivered as in ague or mortal fear. I had said I will not arise—I have no wish to go to Heaven in such a way, and with so much noise and confusion. Soon I found myself incapable of motion. This, however, was transitory, for the preacher’s voice ceased from mere exhaustion, and, after this, gradually subsided the fearfully excited waves of emotion.

“I encountered wild, curious eyes fastened upon me with intensity, as if wondering what manner of person I could be thus to remain passive and seated during such a stirring scene.”

“And you never told us a word of this” remarked Mrs. Mansfield, reproachfully.

“Well—no. The truth is, I felt so keenly humiliated. I had resolved to make a study of Christianity—and here was one result—a perfect impossibility—at the outset.”

“You did not begin rightly. How can one expect to find Christian truth in its charity, unity and fullness from sects that are continually wrangling? In our own apostolic Church only will you find what you are seeking, the undivided truth, as Christ and His Apostles taught,” said Mrs. Mansfield, confidently.

“It appears to me,” returned Cecilia, “that if Christ suffered death for man’s redemption, He must first have laid down laws and rules by which man might positively know if he were walking aright. That this system of laws must have no conflicting one with another—no change from age to age—so plain and so simple, indeed, that a child, though a fool, may not err therein.”

“You are right so to suppose,” affirmed Mrs. Mansfield. “Our Saviour instructed His Apostles and established His Church. To the former He gave the promise that He would be with them unto the end of the world—to the latter He gave the spirit of Truth,

and the assurance that against her the gates of hell should not prevail. The words of our Lord are as true now as when uttered, and the Church of the Apostles exists to-day, beautiful in her unity, simplicity and purity, as when eighteen hundred years ago she was breathed upon with the spirit of Truth."

" You do not then include the sects in your unity ?" queried Herbert.

" What a question for *you* to ask, Herbert Mansfield," sharply replied the mother.

" Nor the Roman Catholics ? I suppose you can hardly call them sects, since sects would signify something cut off, and you cannot find that they have been cut off from anybody, as they have existed since Christ said unto Peter, ' Feed my sheep ; feed my lambs. ' "

" Yes ; they have existed as Romanists, of course. But they have not kept the faith in its simple purity. They have buried it beneath a mass of superstition. They preserve it as a mixture of paganism and Christianity ; such a mixture as is revolting to a refined mind and cultivated taste."

" And still we have to admit that they also are of the true Church ? "

" I believe that is generally admitted by us," said the mother, somewhat ungraciously. " It is very difficult, however, for me to admit it. I do not believe it, in fact," she added.

" How can you say that, mother, and still profess a belief in the apostolicity of the English Church ? If

Elizabeth's bishop was not consecrated by a bishop of the true Church, we have no apostolic succession, and we are no better than the so-called sects."

"Dear me! where did you get this new way of argument, if you please?"

Herbert seriously continued :

"If the Roman Catholic Church be not the true Church, what and where was the true Church during the thousand years, from the time of Augustine unto Henry VIII? If it was not then the true Church, where was the promise of its Divine Founder, which was, to continue with her until the end of the world?"

"But you well know, Herbert, that the British Church never heartily nor willingly joined with the Roman missionary, St. Augustine."

"I know, my dear mother, that the very few Christian people gathered into the county of Kent, looked with suspicion upon the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons by Augustine. The Anglo-Saxons, pagan and savage, had overrun Britain with fire and sword. Naturally, the few unexterminated regarded their foes and oppressors with bitterness and hate.

"When summoned by Augustine to join with him and his in one religion, they hesitated. Why? They could scarcely endure him, because he came from the oppressors' midst. They could not believe that a people so cruel, so murderous as their foes, could be worthy of conversion, or capable of receiving the Faith. Notwithstanding, as true Christians they

should forget and forgive. They would take counsel of a very wise one of their number, who had lived many years a hermit.

“This wise and good man told them to go to the place appointed by Augustine. If upon their entrance he arose from his seat to give them greeting, they should remain and take counsel with him. If, on the contrary, this missionary from abroad remained sitting, they were to accept this circumstance as proof that he was proud, and considered himself their superior.

“Thus, did he sit at the welcome, he was proud, and would wish to rule over them. Did he arise and salute them lowly, he was humble, and they might safely trust him as their friend and brother.

“Unfortunately the good Augustine knew naught of these preliminaries. He had come a long journey to the rendezvous, and, weary, sat beneath his canopy of state. The British bishops saw him from afar. Possibly, he might have arisen, even extended to them a hand, had they advanced nearer. They, however, were ill-disposed to be gracious, and having complied with the letter of the hermit’s law, turned hastily their steps and fled. They had satisfied their consciences—at least so they thought. But it was not long after—it was even in St. Augustine’s time—that these bishops thought better of it, and came together in unity.”

“But you do know, Herbert, if you will but give me a chance for a word, that, during every century,

and I don't know but every council, there were protests by this and that bishop against the assumptions of Rome?"

"True, my mother. These protests, however, came from Romish subjects as well, or from parties aggrieved by extraneous causes. There is nothing to prove that these protests came from bishops who had been originally British. There had been a union. From time to time, from century to century, one and another got up in council, protesting he did not give in to this or that, pronouncing this or that an innovation, a heresy, or what-not. The same as now, in the great Church Catholic, a Luther, a Dollinger, a Hyacinthe conceive false notions, and declare, 'Once it was not so.' Meantime, the Church is not dismayed. These restless, rebellious souls, though their name were legion, have not unmoored her from her Divine anchorage."

"You are talking very strangely, my son," said Mrs. Mansfield, severely.

"Bear with me patiently a few minutes farther. You must admit that during the one thousand years, while Roman Catholicism universally prevailed throughout Britain, there could be no trace of the Christians, as a body, whom Augustine found in a remote corner of the isle. Besides, if the prevailing opinion be correct, that Christianity was first carried to Britain by the soldiers of Julius Cæsar, about the year 50—or, even admitting the favorite belief or impression among Episcopalians, that St. Paul taught

the faith in that lone isle—there is naught to show that it differed from the faith of Augustine. Surely, mother, your own excellent sense of things will admit that for a thousand years there was but one Church."

"I suspect there were a great many dissenters," she replied, evasively.

"Then, as now. But not then, any more than now, did dissenters form the Church. You evade my question. You must think a true Church to have been during that thousand years, unbroken in her line of bishops and priests, or, as I before said, you cannot believe your own church to be apostolical."

"And if I admit it, what then?"

"Have I not often heard you quote this passage?" the son continued:

"He that will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as the heathen and publican."

"I dare say that you have. I well remember the words." Mrs. Mansfield said this in an even, measured tone, but her face lengthened most solemnly, and she looked steadily at the sock she was knitting for the society, while the accelerated click of her needles resounded through the room. She well knew what was coming next, even though her son had not said:

"Well, mother, when Henry VIII set himself up as head of the Church of England, and commanded all to obey him, regardless of all that had been known to be Church authority, was *he* the Church, or

did not the true Church of Christ still exist? Did *he* not disobey the Church; did not his subjects disobey the Church; hence were they not all heathen and publican? Did heathen and publican deserve the grace of God or merit to be called the Reformed Church?"

"What does this mean, Herbert Mansfield?" and the little lady, with a most grieved, shocked face, dropped her work, and, going up to her son, bowed her head upon her folded hands, moaning, as did David for Absalom:

"O, Herbert, my son! Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!"

Mrs. Adair and Cecilia arose and left the room. Both felt that the place should be sacred to grief of both mother and child.

Mrs. Adair understood at once what had happened, and Cecilia, bewildered, comprehended it also.





CHAPTER VII.

HERBERT'S CONVERSION.

T was indeed true—Herbert Mansfield had silently become a convert to the Catholic Faith.

Upon his arrival at Kingston, finding no Church of England, and feeling utterly disinclined to attend sectarian meetings, he had but one alternative, either to remain at his rooms during Sunday, or to go to Mass at the Irish church in the farther portion of the town. As a usual thing, he chose the latter; and though he felt very strangely amidst this strange manner of worship, he soon became sufficiently interested to wish to understand it. What tended still farther to this was an increasing acquaintance with the priest, Father Carolan. This gentleman, who had been for several years, and was still, missionary among the Indians, and who held service at Kingston but twice in a month, not unfrequently dined at the Heald House. The proprietor, Mr. Nixon, had been an Indian trader, and had known the priest upon the field of his duties. Though little given to things of a serious nature, he learned to respect the man who could cheerfully sacrifice all this world could offer, for the sake of wild, rude creatures, often

ungrateful. It was through real respect, and, indeed, an undefined reverence, that the worldly Mr. Nixon often pressed the priest to partake of his hospitality; and though the latter would have preferred even a more modest meal at the house of one of his humble parishioners, he sometimes deemed it best to accept the proffered hospitality. The priest met kindly the young lawyer's advances, more willingly from having seen him as one of his congregation.

“I am an Episcopalian—an English Catholic my mother would have me say,” spoke frankly Herbert to Father Carolan. “I confess I am not much enlightened upon my own religious beliefs. They came to me naturally, and as naturally I have accepted them, all my study having been elsewhere directed. I am attached to our service; I think it beautiful. You will pardon me if I say I much prefer it to the Mass. First, it is quite intelligible; second, it is devotional. Although I observe much apparent devotion among your people, yet I am at a loss to know how the ceremonies of the Mass can arouse it.”

“Simply because you are a stranger to it,” observed the priest. “The most ignorant among us—even one who cannot read—understands every part of the Mass. He goes, as it were, to Calvary, and beholds anew the crucifixion of his Lord. He arises with Him to a new life, and communicates spiritually, at least, with that Bread of Divine love, in the boundless immensity of that Sacred Heart which is all

love. He kneels before the August Presence that he knows for such as him has come upon the altar. For the moment Heaven has come down to him—the splendor of God's majesty, veiled, indeed, but brightening earth for his sake ; how can he but adore and love?"

"The demand upon faith is with you so boundless," urged Herbert.

"Not more boundless than our Lord can supply. It is He who demands this faith. Like good children are we to accept the words of the Father ; the more unquestioningly, the happier are we."

"But, my dear sir, we *must* question. For what is our reason given us, if we are not to exercise it, and judge for ourselves?"

"Why, my young friend, did our Divine Lord found His Church and give certain rules and laws to be faithfully disseminated by his Apostles, if every man was to be still at liberty either to obey or not to obey ? We may, indeed, exercise our reason upon all legitimate subjects ; but when God speaks, even our reason is to be silent. You are a lawyer. Does your client think of saying to you : ' You must be wrong. I have reasons as well as you. I cannot think as you do on the point.' No ; he has no confidence in his own opinion ; he depends entirely upon you—because he knows you have studied the matter well. The man who is sick looks appealingly to his physician. From his hand he will take potions most nauseous, and submit to surgical operations without a murmur

of dissent. He stays not to question his own will and reason, nor yet the physician's skill and efficiency. But when it comes to the graver matters of the Divine law, man deems himself all-sufficient. He needs no direction upon this point, even though he may have given it no more time and study than to law or medicine. If he listens to one whose life has been spent in a loving study of divinity, it is more than probable he does so only to raise objections and put forth his crude views, which are generally absolutely shocking to the mind that is well-grounded in the faith. It is only to those who have given but cursory glances at our religion that our teachings appear exacting, and our faith, if you will, appalling."

It was by desultory conversations like the above, held from time to time, sometimes brief, at others long-continued, that Herbert Mansfield found his interest to be permanently awakened.

With him religion was as a new study. He had never thought of questioning his own. He found himself settled down in it, in about the same sense as he found himself to be Herbert Mansfield ; and he would about as soon have thought of questioning his own identity as the faith which his devoted mother had taught him. With this mother it had been different. She had been educated a Baptist. Having been placed under the care of an Episcopalian clergyman for a long journey, and engaging in daily conversations with one so wedded to his faith, as these clergymen proverbially are, she first began to waver and to

doubt. She did not like change. She prided herself upon being true to one principle. Weak-minded people, she said, were forever vacillating. She therefore resisted the Rev. Mr. Black's teachings and arguments, declaring she would have none of them. For the space of twelve years she carried on a persistent warfare with herself, and as persistent a correspondence with the Rev. Mr. Black, who was sufficiently interested to continue his siege until there should be a losing or winning. The Episcopalian's arguments for going from the sects to the Anglican Church were about the same as employed for a conversion to the Catholic Church. Had the Rev. Mr. Black been a Catholic priest, instead of an Anglican minister, he would have found it just as easy, or rather no more difficult, to convert her to Rome. As it was, Rome nor Catholicity were ever mentioned or thought of. The books transmitted her by mail from year to year, were such as to induce Mrs. Mansfield to suppose that the English Church existed as its Divine Founder had left it—that the sects had sprang from it—and an old branch, so-called, had become defunct and buried in its own besotted ignorance and superstition. At the expiration of twelve years, then, during which time Mrs. Mansfield had become a wife, a mother, and a widow, the Calvinistic Baptist Church was called upon to give up its member; which it did, with as many groans and lamentations and protestations as if the Pope or Lucifer were going to receive her, instead of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Among the sects exists very little charity for the Episcopal. "I would be Catholic and have done with it," say they. A couple of worldlings discoursing the other day, one said there was not much difference among religious societies after all was protested. "Oh, yes," said the other, "the Unitarians don't care what you believe, so you *do* all right; the Presbyterians don't care what you do, or what you believe, so you belong to their church."

It will be understood that after so long-continued a struggle between clinging to the old and accepting the new, Mrs. Mansfield made no half-way move. She discarded the old utterly, as a cast-off garment; she cleaved unto the new vehemently, as the cradle of her soul's fresh childhood, the vessel of her salvation, her heart's home of trust and faith in God.

Henceforth, who should be able to tell *her* of a religion she knew not of? Had she not studied the whole subject thoroughly, and verily she would now give "a reason for the faith that was in her."

His mother's action had discarded for Herbert the least tendency to Calvinism. He was as free to study Catholicity as had been his mother to study the Anglican faith. When he listened patiently and attentively to Father Carolan, he never dreamed that he was turning his back upon the religion of his mother; he was but doing as she had done, when the unheard-of doctrines of Mr. Black first bewildered her understanding.

Nor did the priest unbecomingly force his opinions

upon his youthful friend. Only in answer to his inquiries, and repeated objections, did he put forth the grounds of his faith and the claim of Catholicity. It was with surprise, indeed, that this man, deeply learned in theology and ecclesiastical history, perceived the meagre knowledge, even in commonest church history, which the young lawyer possessed. So delicately, however, did he manage his discourse that even Herbert was left unaware of his own deficiency. Or, may be, the latter had no time to bestow upon this latent consciousness. Certain it was that he became all-absorbed in what had at first been a controversy, but had gradually grown into a series of instructions or lectures.

With no book, if we except the catechism, but the prayer book, by means of which he soon learned to comprehend and follow the Mass, he became a convert. Unknown to himself had this happened ; we may say, notwithstanding himself. For, he had said, “I love to hear this fluent priest talk ; he understands himself perfectly ; he has the full gift of faith ; he fully believes all that he asserts. I will listen to him ; but I shall be safe, so long as I do not read.” And he did not read. But he thought all the more. He combatted vigorously his new impressions—he could never realize them as truth—for, alas, there was his mother, and he would never break his mother’s heart.

Though Father Carolan knew better the impression he was making, he yet comprehended not its

extent. With his habits of thought and penetration, he discerned Herbert's singleness of mind, simplicity of heart and truthfulness of nature. He well knew this to be good ground for the seed of truth, and that it *must* eventually spring up and bear fruit an hundred fold.

But neither he nor Herbert might have known of its taking root so soon, particularly the latter, had he not found himself prostrate upon a bed of sickness. Then he awoke to a knowledge of his true state. Then commenced a struggle of bitterness and sorrow, with prayer and love. He must leave his other self, his mother, or go not to his right mother, the Church of God. Perhaps she would go with him. Was it a vain hope? He remembered her positiveness, her deep love for her Church. But surely she would relent, she would change, she would receive the truth simple and clear from Father Carolan's lips as he had done. She could not listen to the calm, sure words of this good, gifted priest, and not feel that *he* had received them from the Divine Fountain Source.

Thus, hopeful and trustful, he folded his hands and made a vow to God that, if his life was spared, he would upon recovery make open profession of the one true faith. In the delirium that followed, his mother had found him.

From the first hour of his convalescence, Herbert had desired to reveal to his mother the great change wrought in his religious views. From day to day he postponed it, waiting for renewed strength and cour-

age. He dreaded the revelation, although he knew it must be made, and longed to have it over with. But the favorable moment seemed not to occur. He had hoped Father Carolan would have called, and was surprised that he had two or three times visited his congregation, and as often departed apparently unmindful of his sickness, recovery, or existence.

Herbert had not learned that Catholic priests, in regard to making visits, are very unlike sectarian ministers. Because, attending at Mass, he had prevailed upon Father Carolan to accept his own and Mrs. Nixon's urgent invitations to dinner; because afterward he induced him to accompany him to his room, and drew him forth upon the one subject that became swiftly dear to his heart—because of this he thought, forsooth, that the priest should not now forsake him, but with greater reason than before should now voluntarily minister to his necessities.

Indeed, Herbert longed for Father Carolan. He wished to tell him, even before his mother, that he had become a Catholic. Old things had passed away, all things had become new; and in this different world stood Father Carolan, him alone, between himself and God, the friend whose strength and courage should sustain, whose wisdom should guide, whose experience should direct him in the untried ways; the angel, in short, who still should whisper to him of Heaven opened, of communion of Church militant with Church triumphant; of a loving Saviour not dead, but living daily upon earthly altars;

all this was the priest to him, but this priest had stepped out, and his new world was vacant. True, it was lighted by the Sun of Splendor, God Almighty in his majesty. Angels and saints sat enthroned as stars in the firmament. Kneeling alone and looking upward, contrasting his darkness with their light, his guilt with their purity, they seemed far off and unapproachable. The priest had lived in their daily light. His life itself was but an effluence from their heavenly rays. In his compassion, nay it was his office, his duty to lift up the weak and frail, to stand between them and the "fullness of glory," until the foot should learn to walk and the hand to climb, until at length the soul should rest, unassisted but by God's grace, in the bosom of the Infinite. Thus Herbert was animated by two great desires, the one to see the priest, the other that his mother should know his secret.

For gratifying the first, he had already written a note in which he begged Father Carolan to come immediately and see him. This note was to be given to Mary Cullen, Mrs. Mansfield's servant, with request to hand to the priest on the following day. But on this rainy, half-sad, half-happy Saturday, as we have seen, Herbert had been led on unguardedly, until, without saying it, all was known. As was intended, his note reached the priest.



CHAPTER VIII.

“ LOVE’S LABOR LOST.”

SO you thought it best to leave me to die unshrive and in my sins ? ” said Herbert playfully to the priest, after having conquered his first tearful emotions consequent upon meeting him again.

“ I was exceedingly sorry to learn of your illness, and would have been but too happy to visit you. I was informed, however, of the timely arrival of your friends—”

“ But you must have known, that above all others I wished most to see you,” interrupted Herbert.

“ No, I did not know that. And still, I remained over two whole days on your account, embracing the time of your return to consciousness, thinking that possibly you might send for me.”

“ And you waited for me to send for you ? So, that was it. But why not come, anyhow ? ”

The priest bent his wide-open eyes upon his young friend as if in surprise.

“ In such a case we do not wish to intrude. It might have been thought I wished to take advantage of your friendship—your friends might have regarded a visit from me an unwarrantable intrusion—whereas

by obeying a summons simply, we know just where we are."

"Are you not an exception, in this particular, to priests in general?"

"By no means; our place is among our own people; if we go out, it is because we are invited so to do."

"And yet the world declares you to be a class of unmitigated proselytizers."

"Yes; the world allows us to be a dreadful people, and she goes by on the other side."

Herbert remained for a moment silent. He was thinking how to introduce the subject that lay nearest to his heart. The priest made a remark which he did not even hear. At length he broke forth suddenly, not at all in the way he had intended:

"Father Carolan—I have told my mother all about it."

"All about it?" repeated the priest, questioningly. He was one of those self-governed persons who seldom evince surprise, and he now remained quite unmoved, although having no idea to what Herbert referred.

"I had intended telling you first," Herbert went on, quite unaware that he had not been perfectly understood. "God only knows how it came about. It was so gradual, so insensibly, I scarcely knew it myself. Whether becoming aware of it threw me into the fever, or whether the heats and faints of sickness revealed to me the truth, I know not. There was no

struggle save for my mother's sake. But all of a sudden I awoke to the consciousness that I could worship no more in the Episcopalian Church. The thought of kneeling elsewhere than before the altar upon which our Saviour deigns to dwell was repulsive and impossible. As on a glowing page, I read the history of the Church as it had fallen from your lips. It appeared reproduced upon my memory as if freshly traced by an invisible hand. Instinctively I put forth one hand to seize hold of the Church in its unity, and the other to put behind me all that I had known of its multitudinous forms and pretended unities. 'Henceforth thou art mine and I am thine,' I cried to this Church of the centuries. 'I will labor for thee as a servant, I would die for thee as a martyr. O for the waters of thy baptism—for the breath of thy Comforter—brow and spirit faint for thee!'

"Then I came near to death's door. But for me no angel opened it, and I wandered backward to the shores of these terraqueous realms, hugging, as it were, a thing that I could clasp—my vow to God—last words uttered upon the brink of delirium, that if life should be spared me I would become outwardly, as already in heart, a child of the true Church.

"A conversation between my mother and Cecilia—Miss Leigh—in which I joined, turned upon religious points—I betrayed myself ere scarcely aware of the fact. It was but yesterday. It has thrown my poor mother into one of her nervous headaches. It is for this reason she will be unable to see you to-day."

During this long speech the priest had time partially to recover from his surprise. Thanking God mentally, he drew his chair nearer to his young friend, invoked upon him a blessing, and then entered upon a discourse that exceeded in length Herbert's introduction. But we may not farther intrude upon this interview. It was such as angels smile upon, and over which the saints in Heaven rejoice.

Meantime was a different scene enacted in Mrs. Mansfield's room. This lady, throughout Saturday night, had been in a state of great nervous excitement. She shut herself up alone. She would not have Cecilia, she would not have Mrs. Adair. Having had no supper, Mary Cullen took her up toast and tea. No; she would have none of it, nor would she unlock the door; she would be alone with her great sorrow that had come upon her with the suddenness of a summer whirlwind.

She walked the floor, she wrung her hands, she wept and prayed, imploring Heaven to change or avert this threatened fearful error of her son. Had not God listened to her prayers a few weeks previously and spared Herbert's precious life? Was He not as ready now to hear, and was He not now as powerful to save the soul from superstitious darkness as the body from death? Her son a Romanist! It must not, could not be. A wall of adamant would then divide him and her henceforth. O, why had she suffered her son to come alone unto these benighted regions! How strange that he should have gone out

from the illumined East, a High Churchman, a ritualist, and, in the land just redeemed from savageism, have gathered to his heart this wretched, worn-out, cast-off garment of priestcraft—this tattered, scarlet robe of sin—this distorted, slavish, blinding faith—this tyrant over the intellect—this enslaver of conscience and of the will—this master of the understanding and of the affections!

“The priest has done all this,” she exclaimed. “Priests are Satan’s imps scattered all over the world to do their master’s bidding. They assume saintly guises, and do their work well. Talk about Jesuitism! As though every priest were not a Jesuit, as fully and thoroughly as deception, fraud, strategy, malice and sin can make one jesuitical. Shrewdness, cunning, artfulness, deceit, thy name is priestcraft! O, Herbert, you were like the innocent fly, and the spider has caught you in his entangling web. O that my frail hands might tear the woof, and set you free; and they shall, if there be any virtue in prayers, tears, and entreaties. Never can I believe Herbert Mansfield will become really and truly a Romanist, till mine eyes shall be blinded by his open profession, and my heart blighted by his uttered vow. Even at the steps of the altar, God’s own hands may save him. O, Lois Mansfield! O ye of little faith! Did not Abraham give up his son? Drew he not his knife to slay him, when lo, another victim appeared in the thicket? O my lost faith, come back to me! God is good. He will not suffer this affliction to fall

quite upon me. He holds it up as a black cloud to frighten and bring me back to Him, but he will not suffer it to envelop me."

This passed with Mrs. Mansfield the whole long night. She slept not, nor sought her couch.

When, however, the morning sun arose, its garish splendor was to her intolerable. She closed the blinds completely, and laid down to rest. No sooner had she done this, than she found herself seized with fearful pains in the head, which caused her to cry aloud.

These moans, half-stifled though they were, reached the ear of Cecilia, who also had passed a troubled night. Hastily dressing, she hurried to her friend, full of sympathy, if nothing more.

Mrs. Mansfield arose and opened her door. She fell forward into Cecilia's outstretched arms, crying:

" You are welcome *now*. O, I am so glad you are here. I thank God that I have at least you, dear. I am so sick. O, my poor heart!"

Cecilia managed to undress the lady, who trembled with chills and distress, and got her well covered in bed. Then she descended to the kitchen, where fortunately Mary, who was an early riser, had a tea-kettle all a-tremble with the just forming steam. Supplying herself with hot water, and directing Mary to follow her as soon as possible with a strong cup of tea, she hastened back to the invalid, whose brow, corrugated with agony, she bathed with the steaming liquid.

Mary soon appeared with the fuming Chinese panacea.

"Now, drink this tea; it may help set you in perspiration, and after that, you might hope for sleep," urged Cecilia.

Mrs. Mansfield stirred not for a moment.

"It will kill me to move," she thought. But she glanced at Cecilia's face. That face looked determined. "It is no use to argue with her. I can't argue with so much as a straw. I have 'kicked against the pricks' until I am utterly exhausted. I have not one ounce of strength. I am weaker than a feather;" and she languidly allowed herself to be upheld by Mary, while Cecilia fed her as she would an infant.

Lying down again, Mrs. Mansfield groaned with spasms of pain that appeared to rend her brain. Her face became distorted and deathly pale, looking so drawn and abject, as if years of grief, instead of hours, had settled down upon her since the yesterday.

On this Sunday, Cecilia had intended making her first visit to the Catholic church. She would be compelled to forego her intention, at least, for two weeks. Mrs. Mansfield would require her attention for the day. Herbert was not yet strong enough to wait upon his mother, and Mary should not be kept from Mass, more particularly as she had Herbert's note to deliver to the priest.

Cecilia proved an excellent nurse. The hot water,

the tea, and the magnetism of her little hand, provoked the god of sleep, who, spreading his wings above the sufferer, showered her pillow with the mythological poppies. She had murmured softly, going away into dreamland, "this is beautiful to go out and forget, and yet—and yet—I would come back—it is so sweet to live."

Cecilia replied nothing. Indeed, she knew the words were but a soliloquy; but from them she gathered that the heaviest burden of Mrs. Mansfield's grief had passed away, and that, upon her awakening, she would be herself again. Nor did she judge incorrectly. After several hours, Mrs. Mansfield opened her eyes with a start of surprise.

"You here, Cecilia? How kind of you. That dreadful pain is gone; only, my eyes are so heavy. They are like lead, and feel as if swollen to the size of cannon-balls. I was foolish to shed so many tears. They will alter nothing. But it was such a blow!"

Poor Mrs. Mansfield had commenced speaking in brave tones, but her last words were almost inaudible through tremulousness.

"I would think of it no more—not now, at least," spoke Cecilia, soothingly. "May-be your son is not fully decided yet. With strength of body, he will recover strength of mind, and the religion of his childhood and youth may again appear to him with her former excellence and loveliness. At all events, you can afford to wait. What you fear, may never transpire."

"God grant it," said the afflicted mother, fervently.

After a little, she fell into another slumber, light and refreshing, from which she did not arouse until disturbed by the ringing of the door-bell. Herbert even had entered her room, and was sitting by her bedside at this moment.

"I will go, Cecilia," he said, observing her about to quit the room. "It is probably some one for me," and stooping to kiss his mother, he withdrew. As he had hoped, he found it to be the priest, whom Mary had already conducted to the parlor.

The first details of the interview between Herbert and Father Carolan have already been given.

And what was the conversation that ensued between the two ladies when it had been discovered, through Mary, who was the unaccustomed visitor?

"It has come to this, then," dolefully exclaimed Mrs. Mansfield; "and a Catholic priest—a Romish priest, I should say," and she emphasized the opprobrious epithet with all the scorn she could command, "is actually under my own roof, a guest in my own house. For the first time in my life I feel inclined to make the sign of the cross that the evil spirit may be exorcised. I suppose we could not get a horse-shoe anywhere under the sun to hang up over the door? We may expect to be off riding on broom-sticks after this. Priests and witches always *were* associated together in my mind. The Puritans were right:

witches should be burned. ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,’ is the voice of Holy Writ.”

“I do not think your head is sufficiently settled to admit of your rising and dressing,” pleaded Cecilia, as Mrs. Mansfield sat up in bed and reached out her hand for her clothes.

“Well, perhaps not,” said the latter, settling back against the pillows, “but please put up a chair to my back and let me sit up awhile. I wish to make a speech.”

“I know enough about your speeches to opine that this intended one will be good neither for your body nor mind ; and I beg of you—”

“Now just you hush, Miss Leigh, if you please. You’ve ordered me about for the last eight or ten hours, and had your own way with me. I’ve obeyed every lift of your little finger. That was because I was no longer Lois Mansfield, but the faintest feathery shadow of her. Now I am myself again. I am very small, I know, but I would like to see that person who can rule me. And, too, my tongue is my own, is it not ? I do not think I should get safely and surely over these fearful attacks had I not the free use of my tongue to bid them ‘God speed’ at their departure. If you were not present, I should talk just the same. It is a sort of an attack—a follower of the neuralgia, sure with me, as that fever follows an ague chill. It settles me and makes me all right. So do not tell me to stop and desist and be still, for I shall not mind you. Words are safety-

valves. I pity mutes above all. I prefer ears to eyes; that is, I think now that I do. Although, never to see anything in all the sweet world again—is it a thought to be borne?"

Mrs. Mansfield shuddered and closed her eyes.

Cecilia commenced to say something, when Mrs. Mansfield cried out :

" Bring me my glasses, Cecilia, please. I thought my eyes were not *my* eyes. I am sure I can *think* better through these magnifiers, as well as see. Well, to come back to the subject; do you remember—are you aware—that there is really a Roman priest in this same house? Haven't you the faintest desire to obtain a peep at him—just to see what he is like, you know? Of course, he is an Anark in height, and a Falstaff in vast proportions. All Romish priests are. I suspect the hierarchy must have a Procrustean beet. I was once at some sort of a jubilee in Boston, where hundreds of these cruel looking individuals marched in procession; every one with a tall, eight-cornered hat on, and every one next to a giant in size. And I have often heard this remarked upon. It is quite a mystery. I used to admire tall men, but I don't now just for this reason. There is one good thing about it—they cannot make a priest of Herbert; there's not enough of him, bodily.

" I have the greatest curiosity to see this priest; what is his name? Carolan; very pretty, musical—but Irish, of course! He has, doubtless, left off the

‘O’ or the ‘Me’. The ogre! what snares and pit-falls he must have laid to entrap poor Herbert! If Herbert had possessed *my* spirit; but he has a real girlish nature. I really would like to talk with this priest, just to let him see that he couldn’t hoodwink *me*. I would answer his arguments with the contempt and sarcasm they deserve. He should find one woman who was not ready to fall upon her knees to him, and say “yea, yea,” to every absurdity he might utter.

“Cecilia Leigh, just fancy you and I—if such a thing can be fancied—Romanists, actual Romanists; and having to go to confession to this man in yonder! O, how I pity the poor deluded creatures who know no better than to believe it their bounden duty to unfold the secrets of the heart as unto God, to these priests who, of course, have a good laugh over it all when they get together! If there was nothing else, that matter of ‘confession’ would prevent me from ever becoming a Romanist. Go to confession! I would be burned at the stake sooner!

“They do say, though, that priests and bishops, and even the Pope himself, go to confession to each other. For mere form’s sake, probably. Though, doubtless, there is plenty need of it. Should they tell the truth, there would be a great ‘rattling among the dry bones.’ I would like to have my ear at the key-hole just once—if some awful things didn’t get revealed—but how I am going on! I do expect it is wicked. It is such a relief, however, to be able sometimes to free one’s mind. And mine is free now.

I have been a child. Would not you think me fourteen instead of forty-four? I must be a woman now, and make amends.

“Come, you must assist me to dress; I am going down and take a look at that priest. I have abused him behind his back. I wish now to abuse him to his face for the mischief he has brought about. He is himself to blame for all the harsh words I have been saying. Had he not waylaid Herbert, he would never have engrossed one of my thoughts.”

Cecilia had not been all this time silent. Her interruptions, however, having been broken sentences—for Mrs. Mansfield would not yield the floor—a record of them was unnecessary.

She, however, stoutly resisted the proposition for an entrance to the parlor.

“You are not sufficiently recovered. You might say something you would be sorry for. For Herbert’s sake, I entreat you, Mrs. Mansfield,” pleaded Cecilia, but vainly.

“I assure you,” returned that resolute little woman, that I shall not sleep one wink if I do not have the satisfaction of telling that Very Reverend Romanist Father just what I think of him. You had better come, too. No, on the whole, you had best not. He might throw over you his charm of exorcism, whatever it may be; there’s no telling. But there’s no danger of me. Greek will meet Greek.”

By this time, Mrs. Mansfield was struggling with her foot-gear.

"I declare, it is a perfect martyrdom to lace my boots; every drop of blood seems to be rushing to my head."

"I will do it for you," said Cecilia, obligingly; then she added: "But your slippers, would they not do as well?"

Mrs. Mansfield hesitated a moment. Only a moment, however. Her slippers were a size too large for her. Her boots were an elegant No. 2—a perfect fit. We have somewhere previously said that she was vain of her foot. She would not feel at ease in presence of any stranger, even of that dreadful Romanist, unless her foot were cased in that matchless boot. So the boots were properly laced, doing which consumed time.

Then for dress, her black satin must be brought forth. It had not seen light in Kingston, but encased in a snowy white skirt, like a dead body in a shroud, or like a diamond in a casket, had hung peacefully from its hook in the darkest corner of the wardrobe.

"You must know, Cecilia, that I wish to wear this particular dress because it has a trail, and will make me appear taller and more commanding," she said, apologetically. "I am so little," she added, "that a Romanist particularly would not be likely to stand in the least awe of me. I wish to make an impression. I wish him thoroughly to understand that Herbert has a mother who is not to be trifled with, and who will move heaven and earth to undo what he has unscrupulously done.

"This little 'widow's cap' is the most convenient thing in the world. One's hair is forever in the way of a hasty toilet. Under this little scrap of muslin it can be tucked, combed or uncombed, and nobody be the wiser. Now, a kerchief from my box, please. Oh, he will be knocked over with this strong scent of musk; however, one who can endure that odious incense forever and ever can stand anything, I think. Believe me, Cecilia, I am conscience-smitten this moment as I go, but go I shall. Adieu."

Mrs. Mansfield halted a moment outside the parlor door to straighten herself up—conscious of its being the first time in her life when she took not a sort of pride in being *petite*—then boldly turned the knob and entered. The room was vacant. No priest, giant or dwarf—no Herbert was there to do her reverence. For a moment she heard voices at the hall door, then a quick step passed down the walk, and her son re-entered alone.

"Why, mother, is it possible you are able to be up?" he exclaimed, anxiously.

"So the arch-enemy is gone," she said, in grave tones; "I shall have to reserve my shot for another time."

"My dear mother, Father Carolan is the best man in the world. Next to yourself, he is my best, dearest friend. You will not speak ill of him, for my sake."

"He has come between you and me, my son."

"No; but he has been a messenger between my soul and its God. Shall not I—should not you—reverence such a messenger?"

"I am not able to dispute the point with you now, Herbert. But I can never come to believe of him as you do."

"Perhaps not, at present. At least, allow me to regard him as you yourself regard our old, respected pastor, Dr. Rand."

Mrs. Mansfield gave a little shriek.

"Oh, what will he say when he learns this terrible change in you? He would rather have heard that you were dead."

"I regret that any one should be grieved upon my account. Had not Elizabeth enacted cruel laws, and reigned far beyond the usual years of kings, we might all now be of the one faith. You grieve, and your pastor will grieve, that *one* has gone out from your midst. What is that to the grief of a nation forced to give up its precious faith by relentless command of cruel king or queen?"

"Since you and your Father Carolan are such good friends, I suppose you have invited him to come again," said Mrs. Mansfield, determined not to enter upon a controversy with her son.

"Yes, mother, I thought I might be able to attend service next Mass day, which will be to-day two weeks. I hope then to receive the waters of baptism," he said, in a lower and reverent tone. "I took the liberty of inviting Father Carolan to dinner," he added, casting a doubtful, questioning glance upon his mother.

"An unwarranted liberty, my son," said that mother, gravely.

"If you should not wish to meet him you need not. Allow Mary to serve up dinner for us alone. This will only be more agreeable to the priest."

"The having him in the house is what I object to. Fire and water are not more antagonistic than am I and a Romanist."

"But did you not expect to meet him just now?" glancing curiously at his mother's unusual display of dress.

"I did; and am disappointed that he left one minute too soon. I wished to see what he looked like, and I wished to shoot pop-guns at him. To be serious, I simply wished to tell him just what I thought of him;" and Mrs. Mansfield looked in her son's face with a depth of meaning that appalled him.

"You would not be rude, mother, to one whom you knew to be a saint, beloved of God? Believe me, when you speak disrespectfully to Father Carolan, your words wound the Christ whom he represents. He that despiseth this good priest of God 'despiseth Him that sent him.'"

"Alas, my son, are you past hope? Shall I dare even to pray for you?"

"I need the prayers of all good people. My change of faith has brought me to see the necessity of change of heart. I trust I am not past hope, in one sense. But in the sense you would indicate, I am. I am a Roman Catholic, and in this Faith I am resolved, by God's grace, to live and die."

“ You will be sick to death of it ere one year rolls over your head.”

“ On account of that possibility, shall I forego the venture? Believe me, should your prediction prove true, you shall be the first to whom I will proclaim it. But I have no such thought. May I ask, have you ever regretted the religious change you made?”

“ But I made it after twelve years of serious thought.”

“ And does not God’s grace sometimes act iustaneously?”

“ But there is no comparison. Had I become a Mormon or a Mahometan, you might have compared my change to your incomprehensible one.”

“ You do not speak with your usual justice or reasonableness, mother.”

“ I am aware of it, Herbert. Forgive your unhappy mother. She is almost wild with the suddenness of such a blow. And you know, dear, from experience,” with something of an old smile, “ that my bark is much worse than my bite.”

Turning to leave the room, she wheeled around, half curtseying to her son, and said, archly:

“ You see my black satin, donned to honor your Romanist friend? I intended to overawe him. He must have been forewarned: so ‘ Love’s labor is lost.’ ”

“ I might as well have gone down in slippers and dressing-gown,” she said to Cecilia, upon her return. “ Some spirit hinted to him that a heretic was coming, and he fled like a spook. Well, it is best as it is.”



CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOL—THE SOCIALE.

DURING the ensuing two weeks, Mrs. Mansfield remained for the most part in her own room. One would not suppose, from the pert, frivolous style of her remarks as detailed in the last chapter, that she spent her time in reading pious books, her Bible and her prayers. Such, however, was the case. Mrs. Mansfield was not one of those who carried her heart upon her sleeve. Whatever lightness and vanity she possessed was upborne upon the surface like froth and foam, while beneath were the still waters.

“God will do what is best,” she repeated often; “but it is my opinion that He will spare my son at the last moment, as He did the son of Abraham. How can I ever endure the great affliction of his going over to Rome? The joy of my life is turned into mourning, and peace for me in this world passed utterly away. Herbert has been in such mortal fear lest I should marry again, and was not satisfied until I gave him a promise that I never would. Much as he would have deplored such an event, it could have been nothing to him, in poignancy of grief, as is to me his deflection from the Faith.”

She tired of her reading, of her prayers, of her self-communings. Before the first week was over, she donned her hat and walking-dress, and, as distinguished travelers say, "did" Kingston. She made fashionable calls upon all her acquaintances. Throwing aside all exterior marks of anxiety or care, she conversed fluently, laughed heartily, jested freely, so that she was everywhere followed by the remark :

"What a happy little creature is Mrs. Mansfield!" "Just like a canary," "a humming-bird," "sweet little soul," "dear little thing"—and these are not half.

She spent two hours at Mrs. Adair's, at whose house the "sociable" was to be held on the following Wednesday; she promised to attend. The former lady desired much to have some reference made to the preceding Saturday. As, however, Mrs. Mansfield made no allusion, neither did she; so the subject uppermost in each lady's mind was untouched.

Mrs. Mansfield's visits were not all made. She closed them by visiting Cecilia's school. The teacher was quite as much astonished as the pupils. The latter stared at the visitor as if she had fallen from the clouds and they were to learn their next lesson therefrom. She, good naturally, returned their gaze. Fond of studying character, she dived down behind those black, blue, and brown eyes, reading temper here, gentleness there, cunning in one, mischief in another, curiosity peering forth from a pair of grey orbs, while selfishness and pride uplifted supercilious brows.

“What a congregation of small folks,” she mused, while geography and spelling were going on. “Is it possible Cecilia spends six hours of every day mistress of these restless, tireless little people, miniature men and women? And never one word of complaint! She comes in from labor as calm, composed, and unrepining as if she had but come from a refreshing drive.” She gazed at Cecilia with new astonishment. “Wonder if I am never to know anything at all of this remarkable woman. She puzzles me like a conundrum. I think her calm exterior covers a great, great sorrow. But she devotes no time to nursing it. If labor will kill, it will be killed. All day in this Babel, morning, evening, and much of the night engaged with her pen—it is my secret belief she is writing a book—not one source of pleasure—‘all work and no play’—yet she is not dull, but cheerful, unselfish, and so kind! How she stood over me the whole half of Sunday—one of her precious holidays—and no sign of dissatisfaction. Only a brute could ever wrong such a woman.”

Thus wavered Mrs. Mansfield’s interest from pupil to teacher, and from teacher back to pupil, until the order was given to lay aside books. This was done in an orderly way, and the children were given leave to pass out one after another until the fifty had passed the school-room door. Then it was evidently considered that school was over for that day, and loud talking, laughing, and screaming commenced, until one might have supposed Kingston to be surprised by all the Ojibways.

“When able to walk so far, you must visit Cecilia’s school,” said his mother to Herbert at the supper table that same evening.

“She has a school, then?” said Herbert, looking up mischievously at Cecilia. “She never mentions the words school nor scholar. I had begun to think her school was a myth.”

“Not much of a myth you will say after you have seen it. Little tow-heads, woolly-heads, eyes of every hue; faces red, brown, and black, and white, too—a tangled garden of weeds, with here and there a poppy, a sunflower, and, surprising to say, more than one sweet lily, fair rose, and modest forget-me-not.”

“Then it is worth visiting, is it?”

“I think so. That is, it will do for once, or even twice. One may learn a lesson there and profit by it, as I hope I may do. But to go every day—dear Cecilia, how do you endure it?”

“Perhaps I could not, were it not an obligation,” replied Cecilia, not desiring to take credit for having borne her burden uncomplainingly. She added: “It is not as it was at first. I am becoming accustomed to it, and getting quite to like it. I am becoming attached to the children, while they daily exhibit an increasing affection for me. I believe I can do them good; and, in a different way, they are doing me good.”

“I know from experience,” said Mrs. Mansfield, “that a teacher does become fond of her scholars. I taught a public school one summer before I was mar-

ried. I've no idea, though, that I was the faithful teacher you are, Cecilia. John Mansfield, a few months later my husband, used to come every Friday to take me home. I was four miles away, and we had no school on Saturday. He used to come in regularly for an hour or so. Naturally I was somewhat absent-minded upon such occasions, and allowed some things to pass unnoticed. He was fond of telling me that one urchin, reading about the poor man entering the hospitable door, called it the horses' stable door, and I never knew the difference."

"I suppose it makes no difference now," observed Herbert. "The child has learned better by this time."

"Alas, yes!" sighed the mother, reflecting a moment. "He died of lockjaw a short time after. He was the only son in a family that had five daughters. He stepped upon a nail which penetrated the ball of his great toe. No danger was anticipated at first. He died rather suddenly. To one who asked him if he was willing to die and go to heaven, he replied, 'he would, if only his father had any other little boy who could help him pick potatoes and apples. He liked to work with his father, and he did not see how his father could get along without him.' The death of that dear child turned the father's hair white. He wore a patient, pitiful look ever after—a sadness woven with an expression of hope that was beautiful, but sorrowful to see. He went to his child, thank God, long ago. Somebody else picks potatoes

in the same field, and rosy apples from under the same trees; but it is not likely that, with the passing away of that affectionate father and son, all sorrow and sighing have ceased. Now my tea is stone cold, and here is the tea-pot empty.” Mrs. Mansfield rang the bell, and Mary appeared.

“ Mary, have you some boiling hot water ? ”

“ Plenty, ma’am.”

“ Then rinse this tea-pot, put in a spoonful of tea, and just one cup of water by actual measurement, no more, no less ; and, after one minute, bring it to me.”

“ What ! Herbert gone, and Cecilia going ? Is not that impolite, after my efforts to entertain you ? No, I will not detain you,” perceiving Cecilia was about to linger. “ Your time is precious, and I was but in jest. I feel quite in the mood of sipping my last cup alone. Adieu—*Au revoir—semper tuus—et cetera*—and so forth.”

After this season of exhilaration Mrs. Mansfield remained sad and silent until the Wednesday of the sociable. At the breakfast of this morning she thus addressed Cecilia :

“ You will remember I told you Mrs. Adair invited us to the sociable at her house. I am just in the mood for going. I have done nothing but mope since the day of my visit to your school. I *must* get out. I would never do to live a hermit. I should never become a saint shut up in a cell ; a lunatic rather, or a dunce. You will come around, from school, will you not ? ”

“I have the slightest opinion in the world of these sociables—although, probably, I do not understand them as they are here conducted,” returned Cecilia, evasively.

“Well, we will have an opportunity to discover about that. I suspect, however, a sociable is a sociable the world over. Can you get along without us, Herbert?”

“Upon one condition: that you retail all the gossip and scandal that shall go into your ears, or out of your mouths,” answered Herbert, with a pretence of maliciousness.

“Your words contain an insinuation, I think,” remarked Cecilia.

“Talk about woman’s love of gossip,” said *ma chere mere*, quickly. “To find this love in its perfection go to the masculine sex. Did not Adam listen delightedly to Eve’s account of her adventure with the serpent? And every married woman since Eve’s time knows to a certainty that woe betide her if she return home from a visit without having stowed away in memory the minutest detail of the most inconsequential gossip.

“‘Well, what did they all talk about?’ he questions, the moment she gets her bonnet off and settled down with the baby on her knee; when she takes a moment to consider where to begin first, that she may go along in the regular order, and not pell-mell, he loses patience, and cries out:

“‘So nothing was said at your grand tea-party.

You all sat up like stocks and stones, never opening your mouths. They had better all been at home attending to their business. I'll warrant every woman's husband has holes in his stockings and no buttons on his shirt ;' and with this direct fling he flounces, or, perhaps I should say, strides out of the room. But my dear Herbert, you are not a married man—you are an exception to all rules—you shall be treated to all the gossip that is going on wherever I may be. Not to gratify your curiosity—you have none ; but merely to satisfy my love of retailing. Will that do ?"

A ring at the door bell interrupted Herbert's reply, and the conversation was not renewed, save that Cecilia gave a hasty promise to Mrs. Mansfield to come around to Mrs. Adair's at four o'clock.

Including Cecilia and her friend, the sociable numbered one dozen and a-half. Mrs. Stone, the doctor's wife, came so late that she was fined ten cents.

Great delight was expressed at this addition of two to their society. Mrs. Gough spread her wings, figuratively, and would have gathered them to herself, but Mrs. Adair pressed to the side of Mrs. Mansfield, giving her the far end of a piece of ruffling to hem, upon one end of which she was already engaged. The two being thus cleverly *siamesed*, Mrs. Gough was compelled to defer her intended appropriation of the vivacious little personage, who just before her arrival had been voted a charming acquisition to the society.

Foiled with respect to Mrs. Mansfield, she turned to

Miss Leigh. Here she was equally unfortunate. In affectation of more than usual dignity, she had moved slowly. Consequently Mrs. Carter had had time and opportunity to seat herself by the new and popular school teacher. Mrs. Gough stood loftily in the middle of the room for the space of a minute, attracting every eye, when, casting a withering glance first at Mrs. Adair, second at Mrs. Carter, with an air, not quite of martyrdom, she settled down amidst the sea of calico, muslin, wool, yarns of all hues, baskets, satchels, paper patterns, and what not.

Mrs. Carter, who was not one to wither even at a queen's glance, made inquiry about the three little girls she had in school.

"You find them self-willed and troublesome, I dare say?" she asserted, vigorously.

"On the contrary," replied Cecilia, surprised, "I find them docile and amiable. Martha has a decided love for her books, and possesses uncommon assiduity and perseverance. Although Jeannette may be even brighter, she is not so diligent, while Annie, sweet and innocent like the little dove she seems, learns astonishingly. They are three good, promising children; nor have I one word of fault to find with them."

"Oh, well, you know the old saying 'A new broom sweeps clean.' You was a stranger, and they are still in awe of you. Wait until they get well acquainted; I think then you will report a different tale."

Cecilia opened wide her eyes upon this strange speetacle of a mother disparaging her own children, and said :

“ I should very much regret to find myself mistaken. I regard them as good, loveable children ; to me they are very interesting.”

“ Well, there is one thing about it ; you do not have them continually bothering you—morning, noon, and night. You do not have to mend their torn clothes, brush their tangled hair, and pick up endlessly after them. This is what tries the soul.”

“ That may be. But, allow me to ask, are these your own children ? ” a sudden thought occuring to her.

“ You do not suppose the fact of their being my own children, or not, has the least to do with my opinion of them, or my treatment of them ? ” spoke Mrs. Carter, with a display of sudden wrath quite uncalled for.

“ I hope my words could not be construed into conveying such an idea,” replied Cecilia, gently.

“ Indeed, they did convey just that idea. I am very sensitive upon this subjeet. It is not the first time I have been taunted with want of affection for, and attention to those children. But I assure you, I should not treat them in the least differently, were they truly my own. I believe in keeping children in their place. Allow them an inch, and they will take an ell.”

“ These children are very retiring, and far from presuming, I think.”

“ All owing to my system of training. And did you think I looked old enough to be Martha Carter’s mother? Why, she is thirteen, and tall for her age. I am not quite eleven years older than she is. I do not suppose I am as old as yourself. Though most people take me to be older than I am; I suppose on account of these overgrown children. No, I have no children of my own, nor I don’t want any; and that is not all, I won’t have any.”

“ That is a very odd pattern you have for a bed quilt—something quite new,” and Cecilia put forth her hand for the nearly completed block upon which Mrs. Carter stitched as she talked.

This turned the conversation, and resulted in a pile of pieces brought to Cecilia, for her to sew into a similar block.

Mrs. Gough, having an over-ruling passion to be thought literary, had already commenced upon books and magazines. She wished to make an impression upon the new comers, and convince them of the disadvantage of not becoming the *vis-a-vis* of one of her vast superiority.

“ When East,” she went on to say, “ I had access not only to the best society”—this was a stereotyped phrase of hers—“ but to all late books and periodicals. Nothing appeared from press that escaped my notice. I knew the name of every author, male and female. I was not afraid to talk with ministers and professors, for I was fully aware that I could even enlighten *them* upon some points. You talk too loud

there, Mrs. Smith—we have all heard a dozen times that story you are telling. Let there be silence, please. As I was saying, no lady knew more about books than myself. My teacher once called me a Lady Jane Grey. I read Ivanhoe and Dickens and Eugene Aram. This last was perfectly splendid; and Byron's Lalla Rookh and Moore's Don Juan Fernandez, or something of such name; I have almost forgotten. It didn't do to be ignorant of any of these things—every one had to be, at least, glanced over. Walter Scott and Childe Harold and Miss Radcliffe wrote beautifully, and will go down to posterity, I haven't a doubt. Then there were elegant floating scraps from Longfellow, Whittier, Mills, and the Carys—Phœbe and Alice—it was all the fashion to admire them—though, for my own part, I confess I am not so ardent an admirer of feminine poetry. It does not come up to that broad standard, it has not the depth nor beauty of expression; it lacks that expansiveness, that divine afflatus, so to speak, which masculine poetry exhibits—"here was a slight interruption caused by a violent fit of coughing from Mrs. Mansfield, in which Mrs. Adair joined, being in close proximity. Evidently Mrs. Mansfield was determined to stifle her cough, for she had buried her whole face, spectacles and all, in her outspread handkerchief, and Mrs. Gough continued :

" Well, as I was saying—but no matter, I miss all these things so sadly now—we are indeed at the extreme verge of civilization; it is *so* different from be-

ing in the very apex. I have sad hours musing upon this. I thought, however, the other day, this state of things should not be. If I could get my basket of carpet rags around every day, why not my box of books? What if they were not quite new? I was getting rusty, my knowledge needed brandishing (burnishing?); so I drew forth some of my old school books, among the rest Newman's Rhetoric, Paley's Theology and Mrs. Lincoln's Botany. I studied them once thoroughly. I shall only have to read them over, and they will be at my tongue's end—”

“ You must let us speak, Mrs. Gough. Either you must come to the end of your speech, or there will have to be an end of this bed quilt, and of two or three pairs of slippers, and lamp-mats. You know you do not like us to do these things without consulting you.”

Mrs. Gough's temper rising at being interrupted, as quickly subsided at the studied display of deference in the concluding words.

“ True, these things must be attended to—one object of our society is money-making, but when I get upon the subject of books, you all know I do not know when to stop,” looking about complacently, and proceeding to give directions.

Meantime Mrs. Carter, unawed by Mrs. Gough's flourish of words, as being to them accustomed, more than once addressed Cecilia.

For her life, Cecilia could make no reply. She felt if she opened her lips to speak, she must go into con-

vulsions of laughter; not really so much from the ludicrousness of Mrs. Gough and her remarks, as from the contagious influence experienced by a hasty glance at her friend, who was trembling with a suppressed explosion. Not comprehending this, Mrs. Carter's face reddened at Cecilia's supposed slight.

Again she addressed her in audible tones, but with the same result. She arose from her seat indignantly, and, turning her chair, sat down with her back to the enemy.

Yes, enemy—for such henceforth would be Roxanna Carter to Cecilia Leigh. The first moment possible, Cecilia hastened to apologize. She was so engrossed by what Mrs. Gough had been saying etc. Mrs. Carter tossed her head disdainfully. “She wished none of her apologies—she wished nothing more to do with her—she never allowed a person to insult her but once.”

Cecilia retreated in amazement. Though there was that in Mrs. Carter extremely repulsive to her, she had not intended to be guilty of rudeness. Mrs. Stone, seeing and hearing, smiled at Cecilia, and made way for her by her side. And now she had fallen in with one, in whose first gentle words Cecilia recognized the lady. And here commenced with the doctor's wife an intimate and sincere friendship.

Mrs. Mansfield and Mrs. Adair had disappeared. Where? Into the cellar, the only safe place where they might have their laugh out, and a five minutes' talk over the late astonishing literary exhibition.

“Shall you ever again dare say you have read a book,” laughed Mrs. Mansfield.

“Knowledge has had a thorough ‘brandishing’ to-day, if never before,” cried Mrs. Adair.

“Did ever any other woman have the honor of talking with ministers and professors?”

“And instructing them, too?”

“Oh, Madame de Staël, you may hide your diminished head behind the page of history.”

“It must be that the ‘spirit of poesey’ is a combination of her masculine poetry and feminine poetry, though she left us to infer the fact.” Such were some of the comments.

By and by tea was served. It was remarked by one and another, that tea “out West” did not taste like tea at their mother’s or grandmother’s table “East.” Honey was served.

“This is nice honey,” remarked Mrs. Smith, “but do you think honey made from prairie flowers has quite the rich, peculiar taste that honey back East used to have?”

“Of whom do you get your butter, Mrs. Adair? O you do,” the answer being given, “we all get it of her who can, but it appears to me that even Mrs. Simpson’s best, and she cannot be excelled in her line, is not quite equal to our Vermont butter. It must be in the grass. I can’t think it is *all* fancy.”

“It is so natural to think everything at home is much better than elsewhere,” remarked, at length, a sensible person.

“That is true ; but, as Mrs. Smith remarked, it cannot be altogether fancy. Now, maple sugar, or syrup rather ; you need not tell me that out here it is not quite a different thing from the delicious syrup that used to come from my father’s maple grove in New Hampshire.”

“And down in Maine you could make more from one tree than you can here from a dozen,” spake Mrs. Green, a tall, spare person, who had a slightly perceptible twist in her figure.

Mrs. Gough’s face assumed a plaintive, martyr-like expression. She glanced resignedly around the table, heaved an audible sigh, and in pathetic tones thus rebuked the audience :

“To *me* it is a matter of perfect indifference whether the busy bee of the West is inferior to his equally industrious brother of the East. Nor have I ever paused to inquire if the butter upon my table was one whit more or less sweet than that made in our *oriental* homes. It is all alike to me. A certain distinguished poet happily declared that ‘his stomach was not his god.’ I can echo that sentiment.

“But what I *do* complain of—what I feel to be a great deprivation—is the loss, not of this paltry physical food, but of that mental food, that intellectual pabulum, that life of the spirit, and that stamina of the soul, which is to be found in student’s libraries, and upon college shelves in the great schools of learning and academician groves, that flourish where the sun rises nearer and shines more propitiously than upon this book-barren side of the Father of Waters.”

Mrs. Gough's face was suffused with crimson, her enthusiasm having risen to the surface. She looked modestly down in her plate, proceeding to open a biscuit which she had previously sandwitched with butter. She had an idea that she had quite electrified her circle of hearers with this eloquent extract from an original midnight essay. Perfect silence reigned for a moment. Mrs. Smith was hunching Mrs. Green, and Mrs. Jones was almost painfully pressing the toes of Miss Featherstone. Mrs. Stone glanced at Cecilia, while Cecilia looked up boldly at Mrs. Gough, as if to satisfy herself as to what manner of person she might be.

"You put me in mind of a most amusing circumstance," cried Mrs. Mansfield so soon as she could speak, giving vent to peal after peal of hearty laughter. This laugh was contagious; all joined in it—all but Mrs. Gough, who, rosy, self-conscious and silent, ate diligently, as though she had not just expressed her sympathy with the distinguished poet's sentiment.

"I would never suffer such torments as you say you do. I would go back to the old Bay State as quick as cars would carry me," declared Mrs. Carter.

"Circumstances, Mrs. Carter; circumstances, you know, forbid."

"A fig for circumstances, I say," was the careless rejoinder.

Mrs. Mansfield was pressed to narrate the amusing

incident which had been recalled to her mind. As her memory was stored with such things, she was at no loss; in the bursts of laughter that followed, no one suspected her guilty of a ruse to hide her irrepressible breach of politeness.

At length the sociable came to an end—to an end for that day. But on the ensuing afternoon Mrs. Adair went over to sit with Mrs. Mansfield. Among themselves they charitably hoped Mrs. Gough's ears did not burn; though, it must be confessed, they took no precautions to prevent such a catastrophe.





CHAPTER X.

MRS. MANSFIELD'S GRAND DINNER.

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Mansfield had declared pemmican and wild rice to be good enough for the dinner of a Catholic priest, she nevertheless made extra efforts to get up a very fine affair. Kingston could afford nothing of which she did not avail herself. Mary in the kitchen, beating eggs, making pastry, basting the turkey and chickens, said often, in an undertone, she should think the king was coming.

Mrs. Mansfield, superior as she thought herself, and as she was, had whims like the rest of people. Indeed, my gentle readers must be fast finding out that her whims and caprices were altogether numerous. Once she had intended to impress the priest with her satin dress; now impression was to be effected by a sumptuous dinner.

This impression she wished to make, not that she ever was to care a straw for the priest, or wished him to have the least interest for her. One of his class she had never met. But she entertained the impression, somewhat common among Protestants, that Catholic priests were haughty, domineering, tyrannical, and that they exacted special deference from

women, whom they regarded as the inferior sex. Hence her extraordinary ambition that this perverter of her son should behold in her *one* woman who was not the least bit in awe of him. He should see in her a queen in her sphere—his equal, were he ever so learned or accomplished. For this purpose she deemed great parade necessary. She unboxed and newly polished her solid silver service. Silver pitcher and tumblers glittered from the side-table. Finest cloth and napkins, rivaling snow for whiteness, were done up fresh for the occasion. A few late flowers, the gift of Mrs. Adair, mingled life and bloom with the golden and red leaves of changing Autumn.

The dawn of the Sunday was glorious. Mrs. Mansfield herself said so, as she unclosed her blinds and looked forth.

“God forgive me for having wished it might rain floods, that I might have an excuse for remaining at home! No, Lois Mansfield,” she exclaimed, “you little deserve this fine morning! You would not go up to the sacrifice to witness the immolation of your son! How do you expect the Lord to deliver him unless you take the knife in your hands?

“Take the knife in my hand?” she again continued after a brief pause. “Is it not in my heart, two-edged, piercing and torturing? Vainly do I strive to hide it beneath smiles and light, trifling words. O my son, a wall of separation is between us! The same roof may indeed shelter us; but we worship at differ-

ent altars. At different altars worship the same God! Are there more religions of Christ than one? Is it not *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism? Why will not all see that *one* Church, *the* Church, is the *only* true Church? Why will they go back to pagan Rome? Yes, I may truly term it pagan, so full it is of superstitions, mummeries and mockeries, borrowed from heathen and mythological traditions. And that Herbert, my own flesh and blood, should become infatuated with this old synagogue of witchcraft, this ancient and ever-abiding anti-Christ, surpasses comprehension. Were it but anything else under the sun, there might be some hope, humanly speaking, that he might become conscious of his error, and, sooner or later, abjure this odious faith. But, somehow or other, Romanism appears to be unlike all other isms. She has the faculties of a witch, and the properties of a loadstone. A mouse is not more helpless in the paws of a cat than are weak or inexperienced natures who chance to be thrown within the influence of this unscrupulous magnetizer. Poor weak thing is human nature at best; a feather blown about by every breath; a weathercock swayed by every breeze. Doubtless some hoary-headed Baptist, Calvanistic to the core, mused in a similar way to this when I went out from the close-communion fold unto the Apostolic Church.

“So it goes; we call each other white or black; but whether we be one or the other the eye of infinite purity doth only know.

"I have been willful and wicked. For thirteen days I have said I will not go into that Romish church. On this fourteenth day, however, I say unto you, Lois Mansfield, you will go. No more words—you will go. There; the end of the worsted is wound up."

On the way to church a few hours later, Mrs. Mansfield, walking betwixt Herbert and Cecilia, surprised them both by this remark :

"For two weeks I have felt as if I was another Abraham, the time of the offering up of whose son was fast approaching. I have hoped and prayed that at the last hour—at the last moment even—before the very altar—God might give me back my son. Cecilia, before that altar you will be a stranger. You have never met God there. Perhaps he may choose you to-day, and spare Herbert, my son. God is almighty. He can prepare you for his victim."

"My dear mother, that would be a miracle; it could not be performed for you, because you believe not in miracles."

"No, I believe not in them as a general thing. But I so much wished this to happen, that I think I had almost the faith to believe it would."

"*Almost* the faith ! is that sufficient, think you ?"

"Well, I suppose not. Perfect faith must be an assured knowledge. I must know as fully before as after. No; I know nothing of that kind of faith. Do you ? And have you come to have faith in miracles ? You will be obliged to have in that church, whether you can or not."

“Did not our Blessed Lord say unto his Apostles: ‘In My name you shall do all these things;’ and, ‘I will be with you unto the end of the world.’”

“He says nowhere that they shall be able to work miracles.”

“Is not the working of miracles included in the words I have just quoted?”

“Why, then, are they not wrought throughout all these centuries?”

“No century—no year passes that they are not wrought in the Catholic Church.”

“That is what the Catholic or Romish Church pretends. Miracles are a part of her superstitions. We have very pious people in the Church of England. If miracles were possible, why have they not been wrought by such?”

“Did they *believe* in miracles?”

“Well, no, it is not likely.”

“Then you must perceive that they lacked the essential faculty. It is not pretended that every Catholic—”

“Romanist, if you please,” interrupted Mrs. Mansfield.

“No, madam, you must permit me to say Catholic—it is far from being assumed that all Catholics, or, but very few Catholics, are endowed with this gift. But that there are simple, childlike, Christ-like souls in the Church, gifted with lowliness of spirit, surpassing love for things heavenly, and, above all, with this supreme, perfect faith in God and in

His promises, no one can doubt. When these become agents in well-attested miracles, what hath happened? The word of our Lord has been fulfilled. He has shown His power upon earth; He has not forgotten His children; He has kept His word to His Church. What is the consequence? Increase of faith among the faithful; sneers and derision from the unbelieving world.” And Herbert continued:

“ Yes, mother, I can easily believe in miracles. I accept *all* that our Saviour has taught and promised, although my eye may not have seen, nor my ear have heard.”

“ If I do not feel thus—and I do not—it is of no use to say it. And I do say frankly that, though all the world (I had almost said, though an angel from Heaven) proclaimed and witnessed to a miracle, unless I should see with my own eyes, I could not believe it;” and Mrs. Mansfield said this very energetically.

In decided contrast, her son spoke reverently and gently these words of our Lord:

“ Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Cecilia, silent, but attentively listening, received all these words in her heart.

They had now arrived at the church door, Mrs. Mansfield in rather ill-humor at the turn conversation had taken, and at the light thrown upon a subject which she had been in the habit of regarding with a sort of contempt.

Solemn Mass being over, and a plain, practical

sermon, suited to the audience, having been delivered, the baptism was proceeded with.

When Herbert, kneeling upon the altar-step, his hand clasping the Book of the Gospels, read in a clear, distinct voice, the "profession of faith," his mother listened intently—it was quite new to her—but she gave a sudden start when he uttered this, his heart evidently in the words:

"I acknowledge the holy Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church for the mother and mistress of all other churches, and I promise true obedience to the bishops of Rome, successors to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ."

She trembled visibly, and Cecilia feared she would have fallen, when he read the closing portion:

"This true Catholic faith, without which none can be saved, I, Herbert Mansfield, do at this present moment freely profess, and sincerely hold; and I promise most constantly to retain and confess the same entire and unviolated, with God's assistance, to the end of my life."

Had the ordinance of holy baptism been a sacrilegious act, in her secret heart Mrs. Mansfield could not have more strongly protested against it. When the brow of her son was inclined to receive the cleansing waters, she would fain have stayed the uplifted hand whence they freely flowed, even though she had known the breath of the Holy Comforter to be mingled with the words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Indeed, no sooner were the sacred words pronounced, than, the last vestige of hope having departed, the mother bowed her head, and, with tears of anguish, cried :

“ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? How can I say, ‘ Thou doest all things well ’ ? ”

As we have before seen, however, Mrs. Mansfield was of a versatile disposition. Recovering herself, when the ceremony was completed, she obeyed a sudden and irresistible impulse—that of kneeling for a moment before the altar at which her child was henceforth to worship.

“ This once—only this once,” she murmured, as she took Cecilia’s arm and passed from the church. .

“ Let us not wait for Herbert ; he will come with the priest. And I saw there the least mite of a baby to be baptized, so it will be some time, and we must hasten, too,” continued Mrs. Mansfield, “ for, according to Mary’s account, the priest must be in a starving condition. She says they never break fast until after Mass. Is not that a strange idea ? And that always, when people go to Holy Communion, they never eat a morsel from the midnight previous. From the night previous, you may as well say—for who eats at midnight ? The Romish religion appears to me to lie in a multiplicity of rules and precepts. If the ignorant class, of which it is mostly made up, have knowledge of one-half, or one-quarter, they know more than they have credit of knowing. On the whole, how did you like it, Cecilia ? ”

“Mrs. Mansfield, I was very much interested. To those who understand it thoroughly, it must be very sweet and grateful.” And Cecilia sighed; for her heart had been deeply touched, and the fountain of memory stirred. The Church, tender mother, even to children gone astray, in her solemn chants and litanies had spoken mournfully to Cecilia’s soul.

Of this Mrs. Mansfield could know nothing. She became alarmed, however; and, with her customary impetuosity, exclaimed:

“Now, Cecilia Leigh, I beg of you do not go following in Herbert’s wake. Will you, with your good sense, get to liking all that useless form and ceremony? What a pity, what a thousand pities there is no high church at Kingston! Every other creed and denomination except the true one. Herbert would have been retained, and you gained. There has been a terrible mistake somewhere. O, dear! I ought to have been a bishop.”

With this, the little lady relapsed into a silence which was strictly preserved until her own home was reached. She found Mary already returned, and fires in the kitchen replenished. She donned her ample white apron, preparatory to making gravies.

Gravy-making was one of Mrs. Mansfield’s hobbies in her kitchen cabinet. She held it a theory of her own that, unless a gravy was made according to fixed rules as regarded quantity and quality of ingredients, and just so many stated minutes devoted to the stirring—that, we repeat, unless these rules were rigidly

adhered to, the gravy could not be fit to serve. Therefore, the gravy for her chickens, and for her turkey, she, herself, would superintend.

In truth, she searchingly overlooked all through those magnifying glasses which had served her for her eyes since her eleventh year.

“A beautiful brown that turkey has, Mary—just as fine as if the fire had not slackened. But you did not put it in a moment too early—it is done to a turn. And the chickens couldn’t be improved; as for the gravy, I have almost excelled myself—it is truly lovely. The tomatoes are delicious; what did I tell you, that two or three hours was none too long for tomatoes to cook? They want to do slowly, stew gently, but be kept stewing constantly.

“No, don’t pour water to the coffee until he comes. Then pour on boiling water, and let it come to a boil. There is enough there to have it strong served in that way; thus we preserve the delicious flavor. Ninety-nine out of a hundred allow the aroma of coffee to escape in boiling—then it is no longer coffee, but an insipid imitation. You say priests are fond of coffee?”

“Yes, I believe they are, though they take it without sugar; at least some does,” was Mary’s reply to Mrs. Mansfield’s long harangue.

“Without sugar! That is because they don’t know what is good.”

“I don’t know about Father Carolan. He may like it, like’s not. I’ve lived mostly down to St. Joe,

that was near the convent—and I used to hear them tell about how the monks drank their coffee without sugar, and how they never ate pies or cakes."

"Worse and worse. I do really believe they think it a sin not to spoil everything completely before they eat it. I wonder they deign to eat at all. So there are monks down about St. Joe?"

"Plenty, ma'am; a whole religious house."

"What do they look like?" inquired Mrs. Mansfield.

"Didn't you ever see a monk?" questioned Mary, in surprise.

"No; but I have seen a monkey;" and Mrs. Mansfield uttered this as if it were the most common-place saying in the world, though she knew well that, by its expression, she was wounding Mary to the heart.

Mary cast one look of dismay, shocked at the sacrilege (so she regarded it), then turned her back to her mistress and devoutly crossed herself.

All was ready to serve up. As it had been already understood that the priest would have had no breakfast, everything possible had been prepared before Mass—even to the laying of the tables.

Mrs. Mansfield cast a satisfied look over the tables, over the stove, pacing nervously from kitchen to dining-room, and from dining-room back to kitchen.

"A monstrous dinner for one man, it must be confessed, and he looks little like a gourmand—but it ap-

pears to me to take him a long while to baptize one morsel of a baby. Doctor Rand could have done a dozen. O, how I wish this fine dinner was for Dr. Rand and Mrs. Rand! Poor Mrs. Rand! I wonder how she is! I scarcely expect to hear she is living. She looked like a ghost, and such a distressing cough!"

Here came in Herbert, but through the hall, instead of through the parlor door. To his mother's questioning look, he replied:

"Father Carolan could not come to-day, mother. I am sorry I said to you anything about it, since you have made such extensive preparations."

"Could not come, and why, pray?" Mrs. Mansfield sank down into a chair.

"He had a sick call, and you know sick calls are obliged to be attended to."

"No, I do not know anything about it; nor do I wish to know. I do know one thing though, that when a man makes an engagement to dinner, he should keep good his promise. I would like to see Doctor Rand serve me such a trick. You would not find a clergyman in our church who would be guilty of such want of politeness, courtesy, and honor!"

"But mother, I do not think Father Carolan promised to come. When I invited him, I was so preoccupied, I scarcely attended to his answer. As he assured me to-day, however, a Catholic priest can never make a positive engagement of this kind. His time is not his own. This sick call, for instance, he could not foresee."

“ He is not a doctor, is he ? ”

“ I believe him to be a true physician of souls,” answered Herbert, gravely, grieved that his mother should speak so lightly.

Mrs. Mansfield was more disappointed than she cared to evince. As she thought, she had studied her side of the question, and really wished to have one battle with the priest, then she would have done with it. But the priest evidently had no wish to proselytize her, as he had done the son. She really felt slighted that he would not even put himself in position to make the attempt. He was a scholar. She could see that in his face, and in his sermon, unstudied and simple though it was. She felt not quite the confidence in attacking him, that she would have done before seeing him. Clear in her perfections, she fancied she could detect beneath that calm exterior and that unaffected bearing, a fire of thought, a force of will and persistence of purpose, with which ordinary minds could not successfully contend.

“ He has ‘an iron hand within that velvet glove;’ he could easily mould my gentle Herbert, but not me—I am of sterner stuff. While he would be spinning his complicated webs, I would be sharpening my wits to tear them in pieces.”

Thus had Mrs. Mansfield soliloquized even in the house of God.

But her grand dinner is waiting, while she sits, a picture of chagrin and disappointment, her large white apron hanging in folds upon either side.

“Serve up dinner, Mary. I can do nothing more. Not an ounce of strength have I left. Nearly killed myself getting ready for a Romish priest. Served me right. It is the last time. Romish priest! There is something dismal and diabolical in the words. A dinner like this for a man that don’t appreciate it—and I took such infinite pains with my gravy—alas, all beneath the sun is ‘vanity’ and vexation of spirit.”

Herbert, who had gone to his room for a moment, now returned.

He stared in amazement at the smoking viands, as they were placed upon the table.

“I should think you had expected a multitude, instead of one,” he was about to remark, when, recalling the weakness of his mother, he refrained, and asked instead, if Cecilia had been called.

“Ring the bell for Cecilia,” said Mrs. Mansfield to Mary, who, judging from her appearance, was in the same state as her mistress declared of herself—just ready to drop.

“Cecilia—Miss Leigh—” said Mrs. Mansfield, as that lady appeared, “let me introduce you to Rev. Father Carolan”—bowing toward a vacant plate, as if that personage were really present. Cecilia looked in amazement from the indicated vacancy back to her friend, who proceeded to say, gravely:

“My dear Cecilia, although we do not see our Romish friend present, yet we must not believe our own eyes, but have the faith that he is in our midst—

because you know it could not be possible that a priest of the Romish Church would be so dishonorable as to break his word, and that word, an engagement to dinner, which, above all things, should be kept. No; let us have faith in the priest, though every other man be a liar."

Mrs. Mansfield, however, observed Herbert's distressed look, and she forebore. She remembered it was for him a solemn day, and though these lively sallies might divert her heart from its own silent sorrows, she knew she should not indulge in them, when she clearly discerned his disapproval.

"I am very, very glad he has not come," exclaimed Cecilia.

"So you rejoice, too, in my disappointment—and why?" demanded Mrs. Mansfield.

Cecilia, as will have been observed, was usually very reticent in her observations; she would now have evaded the question, had she not felt more than commonly kind toward Herbert, and felt also that his mother, upon this day particularly, should have refrained from harsh speeches and disrespectful allusions. She therefore gave utterance to her thought:

"Because he appeared to me to be so very much above us, so little lower than the angels, that I would not like to have the illusion dispelled by seeing him eat, drink, and talk nonsense like the rest of us."

Herbert gave Cecilia a grateful look.

"I rejoice that you appreciate him; I hoped—I thought that you would," he observed, with enthusiasm.

asm. "I assure you, I had the same notion with regard to him at first; since then, I have eaten many a hearty dinner by his side, but my love and reverence for him have suffered no diminution."

"Between two such ardent admirers," said Mrs. Mansfield, "my dissenting voice will be as wind, doubtless—but you are both deceived—that Romish priest is, at heart, a Jesuit."

"He might be a Jesuit, and still be little less than an angel," answered the young convert.

"Oh, what perversions of opinion," exclaimed the mother. And she proceeded :

"Is it possible that, to become a Roman Catholic, you are bound to believe in the sanctity of the Jesuits? Were they not prime movers in the Inquisition? Were they not pledged by solemn vow to betray, to torture, to put to death barbarously every one they deemed a heretic? With me, to read of a Jesuit has been to read of a demon."

"Please, however, let us postpone this subject. You are doing no justice to my dinner. You but eat now and then a morsel, as if it were a dish of herbs."

"I will dismiss the subject for the present only," remarked Herbert. "There is a bright side and true to the history of Jesuitism; you should listen to it from Father Carolan. Now for our dinner in good earnest."

"Speaking so much of dinners, I am reminded—do you remember old Elder Dickey, Herbert?" laughingly questioned his mother.

Before he could reply, she continued :

“ No, of course not ; he was dead before your time. When I was a little girl he used to drive by in a ‘ one-horse shay ; ’ the curtain turned up behind, and his long hair, which was a wig, braided like a Chineseman’s, hanging down his back in a long *queue*. In his prime, he had been a famous Methodist exhorter. But, like a great many of his brethren in the pulpit, he had a wife who must have been a xantippe ; this I have heard my mother declare ; it was from her I learned this incident :

“ A conference was convened in Elder Dickey’s neighborhood. All the elders around about, and all the people from far and near, flocked thither.

Now it happened that Elder Dickey was very fond of his brethren, and a very hospitable man ; neither of which things could be said of his wife. On the contrary, she was as ‘ Calvinistic ’ as he was ‘ free-will,’ and she could not endure the flings she was obliged to hear thrown out against her favorite doctrine of ‘ election.’ She did not like his brethren, and she was in the habit of entertaining them with a sorry grace. Upon the occasion of this conference, she had already informed her husband that his brother elders must seek quarters elsewhere.

“ ‘ O, no, guess not,’ * he said good-naturedly ; ‘ needn’t put yourself out ; get them anything ; they are not particular what they eat.’

“ ‘ But I tell you, I won’t have them at all ; I will get nothing for them to eat. Not particular ! They

expect the “fat of the land,” and you know it. We are kept poor as Job’s turkey by feeding such a host of ministers, free-will at that’—the elder must have winced—‘our garden is forever stripped of everything before the season is half over, our fowls are all eaten before they are half-grown ; we never have a pig to keep over, and though I make any quantity of butter, we don’t have enough for our own use; and I am slaved to death into the bargain. I tell you, Jeremiah Dickey, I will stand it no longer, and my rebellion begins to-day.’

“ The elder heard her patiently through ; he had listened to such strains before now, and they alarmed him but little. He simply said :

“ ‘ You will think better of it, Patty. It is all for the Lord, dear, all for the Lord ; ’ and he strode off the premises to escape the almost blasphemous volley from Patty which these last words elicited.

“ At noon, he came home accompanied by six elders. He might have brought four-and-twenty, had not a wholesome fear of his Patty restrained him ; so he sent the balance elsewhere. Alas, Patty had been true to her word. She had packed up a parcel, and, with her five children, had gone home to her mother’s house, three miles distant.

“ The large kitchen was swept and in excellent, too-excellent order ; the fire in the huge fire-place was well covered with ashes, the old-fashioned clock in the corner, having no whims like its mistress, ticked away steadily, seeming to say, gone—gone—gone.

“ The elders had all come up, laughing, to the house, happy at the thought of the excellent dinner awaiting them—when, however, they beheld this unforeseen aspect of things, their faces underwent a most lugubrious change. Elder Dickey’s was, perhaps, the least disturbed of all.

“ ‘ Ah, ha,’ he began, cheerfully, ‘ my wife appears to have gone out—never mind—I guess she has left something to eat. Walk in the other room, brothers—make yourselves at home—I can spread a table—done it many a time.’ ”

“ The six elders made a gallant retreat to the indicated front room, and the deserted husband proceeded to make a survey of pantry and cupboard. Nothing—absolutely nothing. Not so much as a crumb of bread, a particle of butter, or even a hen’s egg!

“ ‘ Patty, you deserve—you do deserve a horse-whipping—that you do—’ began the elder, for once his temper getting the better of him. But he cooled down, Christian that he was—set his lips firmly together, allowing not another word to escape them.

“ He took his hoe, went into the garden, unearthed a peck of potatoes, raked open the ashes upon the hearth, buried his esculent roots within, drew out the table, hunted up a cloth, which afterwards proved to be a sheet, placed thereon seven plates, a platter and a quart of salt. Afterward he thought that seven cups and saucers would not be amiss; this reminded him that tea could not be made without hot water.

He therefore filled the tea-kettle and suspended it from a hook over the ashes. All this being accomplished, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead with his red bandana, took his Bible and sat down to await events, and to digest Solomon's song, and practically to illustrate the story of Job.

“Meantime, one-half of the elders, hungry, disgusted and offended, had taken their departure for the nearest neighbors. The remaining three would fain have done likewise, had not respect for their discomfited brother restrained them.

“Patty, at her departure, had heaped the ashes upon a blazing bed of hard-wood coals—consequently the elder's potatoes, having a hot oven, soon were roasted.

“Laying aside his spectacles and book, the elder fished out his prospective dinner, nicely brushed off the cinders from each half-burned cover with a goose's wing that was hanging conveniently in the corner.

“The huge platter of potatoes being set exactly in the centre of the table, the elder called out his brothers. Making no remark at their diminished numbers, he folded his hands meekly, and said grace.

“‘Now help yourselves, brothers. It is potatoes and salt, and salt and potatoes. If you are Christians, you can put up with it, it is good enough; and if *you are not* Christians, then it is better than you deserve.’

“Here he discovered that his tea was missing. He jumped up and looked about. No tea was to be

found, nor tea-pot ; moreover, the water in the kettle was scarcely warm. It had not occurred to him that a blazing fire was necessary.

“With a profound sigh, he became convinced he must give up his tea. It was a terrible necessity, for tea was the good man’s meat and drink.

“Elder Dickey must have been a true Christian; for, when the Conference was over, back came Patty and the children, as unconcerned as if home from a customary visit—and Elder Dickey was neither then nor thereafter arrested for assault and battery.”

All things come to an end ; as did Elder Dickey’s dinner of potatoes and salt, that was fit for a Christian, so also Mrs. Mansfield’s, that was “fit for a king.”





CHAPTER XI.

AMONG THE MISSIONARIES.



N her school Cecilia continued to succeed admirably. She gained the good will of her pupils, nay, the love of many. In maintaining a steady discipline, she made less laborious and less irksome her task.

About the sixth week a new pupil entered, in whom she became greatly interested. This was a young maiden of about sixteen years, who had recently come from the Indian country, accompanied by her father. The father was now an invalid, and had come thus far toward civilization for the first time in many years, partly for medical advice, and partly to be thus far on his journey to New York, when he should have completed a literary and historical work upon which he had been for many years engaged.

The girl gave her name to Miss Leigh as Marie Stella Lancaster, although she added, with that frank look of hers, that her real name was Dib-un-ung, which signified in Ojibway—Evening Star.

“An appropriate name,” thought Cecilia, as she gazed into the bright brunette countenance, wherein beautiful eyes flashed and scintillated like the glowing star of evening.

Stella's father was an Englishman. Her mother, long since dead, was half French, half Indian. This young child, reared in the forest, possessed characteristics of her varied race. Small, yet perfect in figure, she was graceful as a fawn. Though her movements were swift and agile, they seemed never abrupt, but in harmony with the quick impulse of her thought, and the ever-varying play of her features.

Her head was elegantly formed, and her tresses of blue-black hair falling down loosely in heavy masses, seemed, like the starry eyes, to have caught their glitter from some heavenly orb. About the mouth, small, tender and sensitive, were marks of purpose and decision, which might be said to be sleeping or latent, so slightly perceptible were they in the usual illuminated brightness of her face.

When, however, that joyous surface was disturbed, and the features became storm-tossed, those severe lines stood boldly out, usurping or sweeping away all the sweetness; as when the angry storm convulses the bosom and stirs to its profoundest depths a sparkling, murmurous stream, that a moment before had toyed with the sunbeam and the breeze.

Although, to a certain extent, this might be said of many, yet to Stella was it peculiarly applicable. When this tempest ruled her nature, as it sometimes did, one might have judged the soul that flashed through those transformed features, and those scintillant eyes, to have become older by scores of years, and to have suddenly expanded into a monster, scorning bonds and bounds.

Like most passionate natures, Stella had a strong and loving heart. Naturally, too, in proportion to her love, was the strength of that opposite passion, hatred. But this child of the forest, who had never seen a city, to whom the great world was a thing unknown, had been carefully trained. In her earliest infancy, a Catholic missionary had baptized her into that Church, which is the mother of all virtue and religion. Her mother, and that mother's father, had been reared in the faith, and, soon after her birth, her own father had become a convert to the same.

Stella had been taught, therefore, to make it one of the studies of her life to subdue nature, and overcome these sallies of temper. In this she had succeeded in a degree; there were many occasions when she held her breath and clenched her small brown hands tightly, too keep down the sudden anger, or refrain its expression by any outburst. The swollen wave having subsided, the nerveless fingers would fold themselves softly together, and, "Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death," would fall plaintively from her lips. But, against this sudden uprising, this surprise of the enemy, she had ever to contend. You cannot chain the lightning. As well attempt to lay a destroying hand upon the sleeping serpent that lurked in Stella Lancaster's bosom. The strength of the savage, the impetuosity of the French, the stubbornness of the Saxon, was no slight combination in a child's nature, against which her cultivated intellect, heart and will

must ever contend. There must be a battle while life should last; but Christian virtue would come off conqueror, to govern and restrain.

Next her heart ever wore Stella the *Agnus dei*, and, in a small pocket made expressly for the purpose, she carried about her beads.

Thrice daily, since her infancy, had Stella pressed her hand upon this miniature representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and humbly inclining, recited in Latin (a language in which she was early taught): "*Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.*" For her beads she had great devotion. She had not only the appointed times of morning and evening for saying at each one decade, but often in her solitary rambles she would pause to rest on a fallen tree, when forth would come her beads, and the whole five decades be recited before she would stir from her post.

So much admiration and love did this impetuous child cherish for the Blessed Virgin, and so intimate a communion did she seem to maintain, that, in some sense, she regarded this exalted mother as her invisible companion, the sharer of her joys and simple pleasures.

Thus, if she made an imaginary feast, and in the absence of children, (with whom she was not much allowed, and had really little desire to associate) set up dead leaves as so many gaily-dressed little ladies, the first thing with which she entertained them would be a devout recitation of the Rosary. Especially would

she gather garlands of wild flowers, and arranging them in a circle, sit down in their midst, and, with her loving fingers upon her beads, with a more loving heart, offered them all up, with herself, to her, whose pious litany was the music of her life. She loved the sweet June month on account of its myriad roses. She would wander far out upon the prairie and gather huge basketfuls. She never ceased admiring and comparing the countless shades of red, from an almost scarlet to the faintly tinged white. These were her glad offerings, also, to her Blessed Lady, the sweet Rosa Mystica, whose tiny statue graced a small side altar in the rude missionary chapel.

With all this devotion to the Mother of God, she was made perfectly to comprehend that it was all reflected upon the Divine Son; that Son who had suffered upon the cruel cross to save such unworthy souls as hers, that gave away sometimes and often to anger and other sins. She was taught, and believed, as every child of the Church loves to believe, that our Divine Lord was pleased with this devotion, whose beginning is with the "Our Father," and whose ending is, "Through Christ our Lord."

To the child, the idea of a mother in Heaven is peculiarly consoling. She will pray to the mother for His sake, and the mother will entreat the Son. Surely, He whom the Immaculate Mary hath borne in her arms, and carried in her bosom, can deny her nothing. Will not, then, the child's petitions more powerfully prevail when joined to those of her intercessor, the Queen of Angels?

O, happy that childhood which cherishes implicit faith in the Queen of Virgins, the Gate of Heaven, the Morning Star!

Although Stella's mother died while the child was yet barely past her infancy, she was far from being left without earthly protection. On the contrary, she possessed three faithful guardians, by each of whom she was tenderly beloved: her father, grandfather, and Father Pierre, the Catholic missionary. Along with religious instructions, she received early that educational training which is enforced in schools. Here, too, she displayed that docility and that love for acquiring knowledge which had characterized her religious progress.

In truth, whatever Stella did, she did with all her might. There was an avidity in her work as well as in her play. She would patiently master a lesson with as much cheerfulness as she would chase a butterfly. This arose not merely from love of the lesson, still less of the labor; it was due partially to her will and pleasure in o'ermastering all things. Then, too, she loved to please those three old men who never wearied instructing her, and whose words of encouragement and praise enabled her to surmount—we had almost said—impossibilities.

On the whole, Stella, at the age of scarcely seventeen, was quite a literary prodigy. She had learned Latin from the priest, French from her grandfather, English from her father, and spoke Ojibway naturally. She had devoured most of the books which the mouldy

boxes of her relatives contained. Her father, who possessed a literary taste, and who was the author of several volumes, encouraged also in his daughter the cultivation of a similar talent. Even as a child, she would sit by his table and write stories. She never forgot her first story, nor the circumstances of its writing.

One day she stood unperceived by the table, watching her father's pen glide rapidly over the paper. She spoke not a word until he made a brief pause. This was her opportunity.

“Father,” she began, before the pen could have time to start again—“Father, shall I write stories and books when I get to be a woman, like Miss Edgeworth and Jane Porter, whose stories you read to me?”

The father glanced up at the child.

“And does my little girl think she could write stories?” he said, regarding her tenderly, wondering what kind of a real, living story her own life was to be.

“O, yes, father, you say I can write a better hand than you, and I can think stories just as easy. I think them every day; if you will give me a sheet of paper, I will go to my own little desk, and write a beautiful story all for you, father. Maybe Miss Edgeworth began when she was little.”

“Maybe she did, dear; who knows? There, now do your best;” and the father, continuing his writing, forgot all about the little child that was really then commencing her life of authorship.

After half an hour the pet child stood opposite her father, awaiting the lifting of his eyes.

“Ah, it is you again—well, I will attend to you this time, but not another. You must remember that you are never to intrude upon me at this hour of the morning.”

Stella’s eyes flashed, and she hastily crumpled the paper with her two fierce little hands.

“Is that angry little creature papa’s own little girl? Come around and give me the paper. There, now, fall on your knees and say an *Ave Maria*, and make an act of contrition; first, for having intruded upon me at a forbidden time, second, for becoming angry when reminded of your duty.

“Why did you become so suddenly angry?” continued the father, taking his child upon his knee, after she had readily obeyed his commands. “Cannot you bear reproof?”

“It was not that, father. It was because—because I wrote the story on purpose for you, and I thought you would love to listen to it, and then you didn’t care anything about it, and I wrote it all for nothing, and I was so disappointed,” sobbed out the grieving child.

“O, that was it,” the father mused audibly, more to himself than to his child, “an early development of the sensitiveness of genius, an innate craving to be read, known and admired, a consciousness of misappreciation, an instinctive repugnance even to fancied slight or neglect—very well; my little girl will do

for an authoress—we will have another Miss Edgeworth by and by, and she is growing up wild among the Indians; and now for the story."

"Will you listen—really listen?" asked Stella earnestly, for she had too often read to him from books, thinking him to be as charmed as herself, but had the mortification of discovering that he had been quite engaged in thought, without having heard a word.

"I will really listen this time. I am your critic now," said the father.

Stella had no idea what critic meant. She usually inquired the meaning of all words to herself unintelligible—but now she was too eager to proceed, so, laying up *critic* for some future time, she began:

"A story about Little Rosa. Once upon a time—you know, father, that is the way all nice stories begin—well—once upon a time, Rosa Pug-on-a-ge-sheik lived in a sweet grove of trees, in a lovely house made of birchen bark and saplings. It was on the border of a prairie all covered with roses. Other pretty flowers grew there, too, and gophers and prairie chickens a great many. Wolves an deer used to run across it, and sometimes get shot. And once the bear and buffalo—but they had gone farther off, where the sun sets—may be they fell in. If they had not gone, they might have eaten up little Rosa that my story is about.

"Rosa had a father and a mother, but not any grandpa, which was too bad, and sometimes the good

priest came. She had a crucifix in her corner of the room, and pictures of the Holy Family, and others besides. She carried her beads in her pocket as I do mine.

“She had a dog, too, and a fawn, which was her pets. They went with her all over and everywhere. They would lick her hands and kiss her cheek. Sometimes they loved her too well, and she would get tired of them. They would go with her to get roses and strawberries on the prairie—but they would frolic so much she could gather no roses, nor pick the ripe berries. So one day she shut them up, and went off alone with her pail. At first she was glad, but soon was sorry. She felt lonesome, and was so far from home. She got her pail full and her apron full of roses, but she could not see where was the house. It was all a great grove where she thought the house ought to be. She began to cry, and it was getting night, and it snowed. Poor little girl! How she missed her dog and her fawn, how she wished she had not shut them up; if they were with her they would guide her home.

“O, she would never do such a thing again. She would never wander off any more on the great prairie. She would never take another ramble without her dear pets. She dropped her roses, and lost her pail and all the strawberries. She began to say her Rosary, and the snow was almost burying her over. O, if our sweet, blessed Mother in Heaven could pray our dear Lord to send one of St. Bernard’s dogs to

me, I should be saved (you see she had read about those splendid dogs); and just when she had said this, she felt something leaping around her, and pawing at her through the snow.

“It was her own dear dog, and her own loved fawn looking down at her with his great mild brown eyes. O, but she was glad, and she let them gambol about and kiss her cheek as much as they pleased. They soon took her home. Her mother had left them out of their pen on purpose for them to find her. She never shut them up any more, nor rambled off alone. If she had, she might have been lost and never been found. And this is the story of little Rosa.

“You laugh, papa; don’t you like it? Isn’t it good?”

The father was smiling down upon the glowing face of his little girl, the would-be authoress.

“Yes, it will do very nicely. It is a much better story than I thought my little Marie Stella could write. It possesses the charm of originality. I never knew before, dear, that driving snow-storms came when roses were in bloom, and when little girls like Rosa and Stella go strawberrying.”

Stella’s eyes for a moment grew wide with wonder, then drooped with mortification.

The vastness of her mistake became to her perceptible at once, and filled her with amazement. What had she been thinking of?

“Never mind,” said the father, encouragingly, “we all make mistakes; we get some idea into our head, and it has to come out, even when it should

not, mixed up with incongruities, like your snow and strawberries. You liked the story of St. Bernard and the dogs, did you not?"

The head lifted quickly—the bright eyes looked intently into those of the father—and, with face aglow, the child answered eagerly:

"The best of all stories, father. O, I should love to live on that great, high, cold mountain. I should love those bold, brave dogs. It must be quite nice to get almost lost, and be almost buried up in the snow, and then have one of those strong creatures come and carry you all the way up to that house, that is built up so high in the picture, and lay you down before a glowing fire, and have those good people pray over you, and bring you back to life!"

"I thought so," said the happy father, kissing fondly his child, and then dismissing her.

Stella left her crumpled manuscript laying upon the floor. Her egregious mistake had rendered it worthless now in her eyes. But the father, with a sigh, folded it up carefully, and laid it among his treasures. From this time she received frequent instructions in the art of composition.

We need not longer dwell upon Stella's early life. It is sufficient to say that, when, upon the verge of womanhood, she lost, in a single year, her two elder friends, her grandfather and her spiritual father, the faithful priest. The one died of a lingering disease; the death of the other was the result of a winter-night's exposure in a fearful storm. He had

been found in the morning, life almost extinct, by his faithful Indians. He revived, but only to suffer, and to die. Thus perished, at the age of almost four-score, one of those devoted men whose life is a bright exemplar of the Christian faith.

This priest of God had been born in a palace, reared in luxury and refinement, and used to the graces of polished society. But he had been early imbued with the Catholic faith. He wondered by what right *he* was born beneath a princely roof, while the Prince of Peace was born in a manger. Why he should sit at sumptuous tables, and sleep upon pillows of down, while his Divine Master hungered, fasting, and had not where to lay His head. So, in his early youth, he gave his mind to study, and his heart to God. He would renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, and, in self-denials, fasts and labors, would atone for his luxurious infancy, and become the humblest servant of his Divine Lord.

Thus, when he had bowed his head beneath the consecrating hand of his Bishop—when, with heart and lips, he had uttered the vows that made him priest forever—he clasped the cross as his only treasure, and bidding adieu to friends, home and country, set his face toward the wilds of America. Here, for almost fifty years, he labored.

“Fifty years among the Indians!” said one to the renowned Father de Smeet, with whom this priest, of whom we are speaking, was intimate. “Fifty years among the savages! How could such a life be endured?”

“Savages!” returned the pious, heroic father; “Believe me, I have found more savages in the city than in the wilderness.”

To the Catholic missionary these savages become their “dear Indians.” They inspire that yearning, pitying love as has been expressed by our Divine Lord for the inhabitants of a rebellious city.

“Often would I have gathered thee together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—” Unlike the scoffing Jews, many of these untutored children of the wilds listen and learn with docility, embrace the faith, and accept the cross. Then becomes awakened in their simple but strong hearts an undying attachment to the teacher of the new law, the bearer of the gospel, the messenger of glad tidings.

The more profound and enduring is this marked, unselfish affection, inasmuch as the missionary, while elevating the mind and the faith, hesitates not to share their simple joys, their frequent dangers, to sup with them out of the same dish, and to sleep upon a blanket, under the same tent. Outwardly he becomes one of them, that he may make them interiorly one with him and the Divine Master whom he serves. Well, this good priest finished his labors, and went to his reward. His reward? Then he did not toil for naught, as men are apt to say. He expected a repayment for his sleepless nights, his hunger and thirst, heat and cold, watchings and weariness?

Yes; this he did expect; for he bore about with

him constantly this comforting assurance: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these little ones, ye did it unto Me."

The natural brethren of this good priest, at their departure from this life, had been attended by princes and nobles, and received the eulogies of the great of this world. They had been laid away in marble sepulchres, amidst the glittering insignias of rank and wealth, and their virtues had been written in letters of gold upon tablets of stone. Not nobles nor princes bent above the death-couch of the humble priest. Bands of men, groups of women, and huddling crowds of children stood or knelt around with weeping countenances. They hoped; they prayed; they could not believe their good father was going to die. The Heavenly Master would surely spare him to them a little longer. And yet, he told them that he was about to leave them for the better country; and whenever had that loved voice uttered to them an untruth? But this was so unwelcome, so impossible of realization! And, yet, it came to pass. And while the soul of the saint ascended upward to enter into the joy of his Lord, around the lifeless body arose the most heart-rending lamentations of grief and woe.

Only a simple wooden cross rises above the grave of the missionary priest. But daily is this cross garlanded with flowers, woven by the fingers of affection. Tears of grateful love water the flowers that bloom above him. A garden of roses has been planted around, casting sweet fragrance, though not so sweet

as was the fragrance of his sweet charity. Evergreens transplanted, tower up amidst the blooms of summer, and the white mounds of pure snows in winter.

Going to and from the altar in the chapel, the worshippers kneel at this grave—at this second altar of their hearts—to offer a prayer for themselves and for the dead. They have received the new priest as one sent from God to take the place of him who is gone; but never, while life shall last, will fade out the love and memory of him who may truly be said to have given his life for theirs.

Among the sincere mourners of the departed priest were Stella and her father. They had not yet recovered from the death of their relative, Mr. Le Fond, which had occurred but a few months previously. True, they had not always enjoyed the society of one or of the other. While the priest was often absent on missions for weeks, even months at a time, the Frenchman, who was a successful trader, made long journeys hither and thither, his tarryings at home being few and transient.

Still, there was ever the comfort of expecting them, the prospective joy of a reunion.

Now, this was all over. Father and child, the former particularly, began to realize that the great charm of this hidden wilderness had been the two dear friends, now removed from them forever in this world. With them had been enjoyed a little Eden of their own. Death, to them a serpent, had stepped in, and it was no longer Paradise. All upon which

their eyes rested reminded them of the loved and lost. Whichever way they turned, the sword of remembered loss pierced them afresh, and kept open the bleeding wounds.

Besides, as if misfortune loves to follow misfortune, the father's health began to fail. The sedentary life of years had undermined a constitution naturally strong, leaving him neither the power nor the inclination to battle bravely with successive shocks of grief.

Should he, too, drop by the wayside, as had his fellows, what would become of his child ?

A result of this startling question was the removal to Kingston. What though it appeared to sever the last tie binding them to the past ? Was not Heaven just as near to the growing, wicked town as to the missionary chapel ? Would they not as surely meet their friends from widely-sundered graves, as though, side by side, they had awaited the trump of the archangel ?

To remain had been impracticable ; they went, therefore, although to go was like suffering the bitterness of death.

The father's ultimate intention had long been that, at his death, his daughter should enter a convent. But while he should live, he would retain her by his side. It was to him a precious comfort that, when his child should be left fatherless, she would have a mother in the Church, which would take her to her bosom, and shield her from the snares and deceits of the world.



CHAPTER XII.

MARIE STELLA.

MARIE STELLA," said Mr. Lancaster to his child a few days subsequent to the day of Herbert Mansfield's baptism, "I have made inquiry, and find that the younger of those two strange ladies who were at Mass on Sunday is the teacher of the school. I have a particular reason for your making her acquaintance. She much resembles an old friend of my early years. I like her face—she might prove a good friend to you. She is not a Catholic, although Mrs. Mansfield, of whom I have made inquiries, is confident of her being that way inclined. You are very deficient in needlework and drawing. Make ready, and I will go with you to the school-house at the beginning of the week."

The school had been already called to order, when Mr. Lancaster, accompanied by his daughter, knocked lightly at the door. Cecilia, opening it, and meeting the dark eyes of the stranger, started back. Surely she had seen those eyes before! Was it in dream, in vision, or was it in some anterior existence, of which sometimes she fancied herself to catch flashing glimpses. Thought is electrical, and, with Cecilia, this was but momentary. 157 14

She recovered herself, and received quietly Stella and the directions with regard to her.

Stella proved to be but one of several new pupils. She might have been the elder of them all; several, however, were larger and taller than herself.

One of these, Susan Brown, was given a seat directly in front of Stella.

The eyes of Susan, and not only hers, but the eyes of the whole school steadfastly regarded this stranger in the village, this bright-looking brunette.

“They are very ill-mannered—these children,” quoth Stella, under her breath, withdrawing her flashing orbs, and proceeding to unroll her parcel of brown muslin.

The teacher, attracted by Stella’s quaint and striking countenance and figure, gave to her her first attention. She was to be in attendance but two or three hours of each morning. These were to be devoted simply to needle-work and drawing. An incident occurred during the very first day, quite illustrative of the quick, impetuous, but withal just and generous nature of Stella Lancaster.

As we have before said, Susan Brown had turned deliberately around, and with very disagreeable, bold gray eyes stared at Stella. She had heard of her as having spent her whole life in the Indian country. She must be a wild creature, she had thought. She was surprised, therefore, on beholding her so bright and fine-looking.

“She must be a nobody, though,” concluded

Susan, "and I am resolved to let her know that I look down upon her."

Miss Leigh's sudden command—"all faces this way," had kept Susan in proper position but a few moments. Stella became much annoyed—but she wisely strove to affect unobservance of the rudeness.

During the fifteen minutes recess Stella remained in her seat. Before the quarter of an hour was half expired, Susan Brown returned to her place, throwing bold, contemptuous glances upon her neighbor, with whom she was provoked simply from having found her to be too interesting. The bell had not yet sounded for the ingress of the pupils, when little Honora McTiernay, prompt and faithful, came in hurriedly, resuming her usual place in front of Susan Brown's desk. Scarcely had she done so, when she was dealt a severe slap upon the face by the strong hand of Susan. In another moment the cheek of Susan Brown tingled with pain and confusion; for Stella Lancaster, who had witnessed the insolent brutality of the stout, overgrown girl toward the small delicate child, was aroused instantly into fury; without hesitating a moment as to time, place, or proprieties, she obeyed her one first impulse, and avenged the defenceless. The quick blow from her brown little hand had in it the strength of steel and the virtue of flame.

Involuntarily Susan gave a shriek. Miss Leigh came upon the scene. But for her, Susan and Stella might have plucked out each others eyes. Stella's

glowed with a lurid light. The muscles of her face, for a moment, twitched convulsively. The lines about her mouth and nostrils seemed carved in stone. The loosely flowing raven black hair trembled with the indignation that had gained a mastery. Even Susan Brown, angry and bold as she was, turned away her eyes from that face so fearful in its transformation.

“What can be the meaning of this?” questioned Miss Leigh.

Already had Stella folded her small hands together, and, almost instantly as it came, died out the anger from her face. She was the first to speak.

“I beg your pardon, Miss Leigh. I took vengeance in my own hands, whereas I should have left it to you. But it was so sudden, and I cannot *bear* injustice, least of all to the weak and defenceless. I ask your pardon.”

Again Susan turned about to study anew the stranger in this other still more mysterious phase of her character.

“Mad as a bedlamite one moment, meek as Moses the next,” she murmured inaudibly—resolving to be no longer in fear of her.

Miss Leigh repeated her question, this time looking steadily at the still angry, moody Susan.

“I slapped Nora McTiernay in the face,” she answered, defiantly.

“Why were you guilty of such misconduct?” the teacher inquired, sternly.

“She made faces at me,” was replied.

“I did *not* make faces at her,” spake the little girl, decidedly.

“Well, she *looked* at me, and I won’t be stared at by no Irish girls, big or little,” vehemently declared Susan, throwing a disdainful glance at the innocent object of her aversion.

“No such speeches as that are allowable in this school room. My pupils are to be judged of by their behavior. Honora McTiernay has for six weeks conducted herself in the most exemplary manner. I fear, Susan, you have been very much to blame. Such conduct, as yours, must not be repeated, if you do not wish this, your first day, to be also your last in this school.” Such was Miss Leigh’s admonition. As well she might not have spoken, the impenetrable Susan’s response being:

“Well—I’d like another seat. I’m not going to stand it between a paddy and, and—an—Indian.” She hesitated a moment before pronouncing the last word—but, glancing around and beholding the imperturbable face of Stella, ventured to give it utterance. She more than expected a flash of anger—so also did Miss Leigh. But Stella was now fore-armed. Taunting words might be thrown at her as so many deadly missiles, she was not to be surprised out of her settled calmness of manners. She had said silently to herself, and was still repeating over:

“O blessed Jesus! give me grace to learn of Thee to be meek and humble of heart.

"Mortify in me, O Jesus, whatever displeaseth Thee, and make me according to Thine own heart.

"O God of my heart and my portion forever: Let nothing in life or death ever separate me from Thee."

Miss Leigh became now indignant as well as astonished.

"You are, indeed, unworthy the place you now occupy," she said to Susan, severely. "Indeed, you have proved yourself unworthy a place in this school. Instantly apologize, and make promise of better behavior, or take your books and leave."

"I will leave," the unruly girl said, quickly gathering up her books. "Good bye, ma'am," she added, throwing on her sunbonnet and marching heavily and saucily down the room and out of the door.

The bell was then rang, and school again called to order.

But Susan Brown still lingered in the hall. She was chewing the bitter quid of regret.

Let it be said in partial extenuation of this young girl's bad manners that her mother had died during her infancy. Her indifferent father had again soon married, and the stepmother had proved a harsh one to the poor child. Unloved, she had given her love to none. The half brothers and half sisters, with whom her arms were constantly filled, appeared to be a necessary part of her wretched existence. They were a millstone about her neck; and they increased in numbers almost as rapidly as the years that went over her.

She had grown up ignorant, rough and rude. Thus would she have continued, had not the neighbors shamed the parents into starting her to school. Her experience at Miss Leigh's was not her first. It is needless, however, to assert that hitherto she had been as badly managed at school as at home. She was always in difficulty or in disgrace. She had no desire for learning; school was to her but an absence from the galling servitude of home. It was the least of two evils.

Therefore it was that, after her prompt alacrity in gathering up her books and bidding adieu to Miss Leigh, she stopped and reflected outside.

The picture of her disordered home arose before her. The scolding, peevish stepmother, the stern, unrelenting father, the unwashed, unkempt images of Bettie, Lizzie, Peg, Sam, John and the twins appeared in all their dread reality. Buckets of water to be brought from the river—clothes to be washed, floors to be scrubbed—the longer she reflected the more terrible appeared the prospect. It was humiliating after all her great show—she would no longer be able even to suppose herself capable of overawing either teacher or scholars—and yet she was resolved.

She opened the door and inserted her head.

“Miss Leigh, will you come here a minute?”—

“Miss Leigh, if you will let me come back and say no more about it, I will be good;” she said to that lady, who came out as requested, closing the door gently. “I will sit anywhere; only I would rather

not sit where I did before, and I won't trouble anybody. I don't want to go home, I can't go home—it is a hundred times worse there than here. I hate 'em all worse—worse'n—" she was about to say that Indian-girl—but she refrained.

"Very well; I will try you once more. But you must be on your guard, engage in no quarrels, and cease entirely your impertinence. Remember to think before you speak; bear in mind that a repetition of your offence of to-day will expel you from the school."

Susan faithfully promised; and, from that day, was commenced in her a favorable change.

It may be here stated, briefly, although it has no bearing upon our story, how it was that Miss Leigh had become favorably impressed with Honora McTiernay, the little girl which had been so unjustly assaulted.

Honora possessed remarkable powers for mimicry. During play-hours she was often entreated by her companions to amuse them by barking like a dog, meowing like a cat, singing like a bird, or something of that kind. One day she had been engaged in showing off for the benefit of some new pupils, who had been finely deceived, looking about first for a cat, or a dog, jumping out of a squirrel's way, or looking upward for the cawing raven, each and all of which so distinguished for voice, was bodily invisible.

Being recalled to the school-room, Honora was revolving in her mind her complete success, and inno-

cently marvelling how it was that she and none of the others possessed so rare a faculty.

“Why, it is so easy—” she soliloquized. “I have only to throw my tongue just a little down in my throat and there it is—”

Immediately the whole school became convulsed with laughter, no one being more astonished than Honora herself at her involuntary feline cry.

Miss Leigh arose from her chair. Commanding and awaiting silence, she sternly inquired who was the author of this grave offence.

“Nora McTiernay,” was cried out by a multitude of dissonant voices.

Now, Honora McTiernay had been so well-behaved a child that Miss Leigh would have sooner suspected almost any other pupil as the offender.

“Can it be possible that was you, Honora?” questioned Miss Leigh, doubtfully.

“Yes, ma’am—” answered the child, frankly, her face covered with crimson, and her manner painfully confused.

Miss Leigh had really not anticipated such an answer as this.

In other cases, by other pupils, even in clear convictions like the present, prompt denials had been the universal rule. Usually Miss Leigh had shut her eyes to the truth, and allowed the pupil’s protestation to be received, shocked, as she had been, at multiplied, bare-faced falsehoods.

To such culprits she had said simply :

"Your companions tell me you are guilty. You assure me that you are innocent. I cannot think you could be guilty of telling a wicked lie—surely you would not do that. I must believe you, and think your accusers are mistaken."

Upon the present occasion Miss Leigh looked at the truthful child with admiration. The pretty, fair-faced girl of eight years, whom she had more than once heard *accused* of being Irish, assumed a new interest in her eyes. The blue eyes, downcast and moist with unshed tears, the cheek and brow overspread with a settled blush, the timid shrinking of the modest little figure, all struggling with a masterly effort at self-possession, formed a pleasant picture for Cecilia Leigh, the more appreciated as in contrast to the unsightly ones she was daily called to look upon.

Thus it happened that Honora had become her favorite. In consequence, too, of the injury the little girl had received from Susan Brown, Stella Lancaster became henceforth her warm friend and staunch protector. And, daily, both Stella and Honora grew in the favor and friendship of Cecilia Leigh.

To the latter, this gifted, cultivated, but simple and pious child of the forest formed an attractive study. She had never before found combined in a character such noble qualities so unconsciously possessed, such a passionate nature so self-governed and controlled, such simplicity of mind and such purity of heart united with such strength of purpose and domination of will. She was reminded of that fine

idea in one of Schiller's exquisite poems, which is something to this effect: As the artificer of church bells seeks to alloy the hard metal with the soft, in order that the composition may give forth the sweetest melody, so the Supreme Ordainer of marriage had willed that this sacrament should attain its noblest estate when the strong united with the tender, the lofty with the gentle, the proud with the meek. In Stella was joined both the one and the other. She was the perfect work of the Master's hand. To others it had been given to prune and chisel here and there, to polish and refine and make beautiful the model.

If the teacher studied the pupil as she would have done a book or a work of art which she had fallen to love, the pupil repaid that study by a loving revealing of her nature, unconscious as the bud unfolding into the blossom. As to the sun the flower unfolds its petals, so the heart-tendrils of this forest-flower turned with a tender yearning to the lovely young woman who had arisen as a light over her path.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRIEST'S VISIT TO MRS. MANSFIELD'S.

THERE became a settled habit for Cecilia to accompany Herbert Mansfield to Mass. A habit, also, for Mrs. Adair to spend the greater portion of every Sunday with Mrs. Mansfield. Indeed, these two ladies made a mutual compact to attend no meetings, no Mass; to read their own prayers from the book of "Common Prayer," and to converse religiously for an hour by way of sermonizing. How much they advanced in holiness is for no outsider to presume to say.

On several Sundays succeeding the one of Mrs. Mansfield's grand dinner, that lady had made sundry extra preparations, thinking it barely possible that the priest might accompany her son. Not a single allusion, however, had she deigned to make to Father Carolan. She listened to Cecilia and Herbert's discussions of what they saw and heard at the Irish church, as though she heard not. She did violence to her tongue even, so firm had been her resolve to "spew the whole thing out of her mouth."

Although exceedingly grieved to perceive that Cecilia became daily more and more interested in

the faith that seemed completely to have taken possession of her son, she would not interfere so much as by one word. If she signally failed with regard to Herbert, how worse than wasted would be remonstrances upon Cecilia!

Therefore, at table, which was almost the sole occasion of these conversations betwixt the younger people, Mrs. Mansfield miraculously kept silence. We say "miraculously," that being the precise adjunct employed by herself. She loved to talk; it was a self-denial to refrain. Now and then an enemy used to say of her—"she loves to hear herself talk."

Cecilia could not conceal from herself that one thing, which had attracted her so strongly to Stella Lancaster, had been that she was a Catholic. But Stella had never been anything else. She scarcely comprehended that there could be another religion founded upon the one Christ Jesus—upon the one rock, Peter—upon the same twelve Apostles. Had one talked to her upon any other than the one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, she would have regarded the speaker with a tender pity, and included him in her prayers for the heathen.

She could enlighten Cecilia, but was unable to expel her doubts. She could portray her religion till it appeared a beautiful picture, but she could not bring it within Cecilia's grasp. Her own soul, full of unquestioning faith, she could impart a spirit of enthusiasm, but not the divine light which cometh only from above.

The faith of Stella was warm and full of life, like the sun. In that sunshine loved Cecilia to dwell for precious moments and hours. In that untroubled illumination, she rested from the heats of controversy between learned doctors, into which she entered, and with which she contested as if she had taken up a gauntlet instead of a book.

Weary and bewildered, she might have abandoned all, had not Stella, her picture of piety, her personation of faith, shone steadily—a starlight upon the troubled waste—a star upon the expanse of sea. *Marie Stella*—truly, *Marie Stella*.

Catholicity is accused of worshipping the created instead of the Creator. Catholicity, it is said, impels the sailor to call upon “Mary, Star of the Sea,” instead of upon God, who made the sea.

Catholicity is thus accused because the accuser is talking upon a subject of which he knows nothing. Happily, every Catholic perfectly understands that when he calls upon Mary for help, it is for the assistance of her prayers. He has faith in Mary as an intercessor, even as she has faith in God as a protector and deliverer.

He has great faith that God will listen to the prayers of anyone who is very good and holy. Hence, every Catholic is eager for the prayers of one he deems better than himself. Even Protestants will ask a good Christian to pray for them. The Catholic goes still farther, begging the prayers of saints, angels and the Mother of the Divine Son.

Why? Because they have found favor with God. Because they are pure, even in the eye of infinite purity. Because God, who hath promised that the prayer of the just man shall prevail with Him, will have regard to the intercessions of those nearest His throne.

When the Catholic pleads: "O, saints and angels, and Holy Mary in Heaven, we humbly beg the assistance of your prayers and intercessions that it may be given us to lead a pure life, holy and acceptable unto God," is no honor given to the Supreme Being? Is not the aspiration really unto Him, who penetrates the recesses of the heart? Would man ask all the happy spirits of the Celestial World to present his prayers before the throne of the Almighty that certain requests might be granted him, if he did not feel that God alone could grant them, and if his soul were not first filled with adoration for his Maker, in this Divine petition, "Our Father," which is the beginning of all prayers?

Will it be asked why Cecilia Leigh had commenced a serious study of the science of Catholicity? Can there be a question as to her motive, or that she has a motive?

It may appear strange, especially when we consider that it had been the religion of her childhood. Not singular, however, to those brought up without the fold, to whom, either in youth, as to Herbert, or in the meridian of life, as to many favored souls, the beauty of Catholicity has dawned as glorious morn-

ing to a dreary night. With avidity these study a subject that so fascinates and takes possession of the soul.

Transfer a native of the Poles to the flowery land of the tropics—what is the result? Are not the organs of sound and of vision as if new-born into a sense of infinite beauty and melody?

But the indolent native denizen of the “clime of the sun” sees no remarkable charm in the universal, perpetual beauty. No more it arouses him than does the idle wind or the ever-murmuring stream. So one born and reared in a home of true and practical Catholicity, receives it as he does his daily bread, perhaps indifferently, and without conscious thankfulness.

So with Cecilia Leigh. In the home of her adopted mother she had breathed a Catholic atmosphere, that insensibly had moulded her for a true, good woman. She had imbibed the spirit of the Church without questioning its dogmas, its formulas, its sacred character. From the tenderest age, however, her associations had been more or less with anti-Catholic or anti-Christian people; because Mrs. Leigh was a convert to the faith, and all her relatives still dwelt in the vast exterior. Particularly from the age of seventeen had Cecilia been more or less thrown under the influence of Mark Varnam, her future husband.

Mark was a cousin of Mrs. Leigh’s, a favorite and privileged character in the house. Being fully aware

of what he termed Mrs. Leigh's bigotry, he studiously avoided, in her presence, the least allusion to his so dissonant views and opinions. She was, therefore, for a long time quite unaware of the danger to which later, and too late, she found her beloved child to have been exposed.

From the period of Cecilia's marriage with Mark Varnam, she had become nurtured and trained in the rationalistic school, had imbibed false ideas of society, with wrong impressions of its wants, needs and capabilities; she had come, then, naturally, to regard religion as a myth, as a superstition fit for the vulgar, and not really believed by its more enlightened professors. Gradually, Christianity came to occupy a place in her estimation no higher than Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or any pagan religion. She looked for a time to come, in some future, perhaps distant, when a new form of religion should take place of Christianity, as Christianity had supplanted Pantheism, Druidism, and other worships of false gods.

But, as we have seen, the whole ground of Cecilia's later beliefs had heaved beneath her feet. In the shock that had sent her reeling from her only standpoint, her helpless hands had outreached for the nearest support. Her heart turned away from the world that had wounded her. She was weary, and needed rest. Is it not unto such as Cecilia that these Divine words have been spoken: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-burdened, and I will refresh you?"

As we have seen, a mind disciplined like Cecilia's turned away dissatisfied and disgusted with the disjointed fragments of Christianity, which sectarianism had to offer. She had experienced only repulsion from her visit to the meeting-houses. But she scarcely yet dared acknowledge to herself the effect of her one visit to the Catholic church—the mother of her childhood and early youth. She attempted not to explain wherein rested the charm of the spell that had attracted her. Early associations might have flooded her memory, and softened her heart; but she was inexpressibly soothed and comforted by the solemn stillness that brooded, like a blessing, above the kneeling worshippers. Long ago she had knelt in the house of God; but never before seemed she to have bowed the knee unto God himself. In this house, which appeared unto her a temple, before this altar, whereon sacrifice might be offered, in the hush, solemn, as if the King of kings were visibly enthroned, she knelt as though impelled irresistibly. An unusual peace had stolen into her heart—a great calm upon the troubled waves of her experience. Had she given expression to the wordless emotion that had subjugated her, it would have been in terms similar to these: "Wandering amidst a wilderness, I have found the unknown God. I lay my sins and sorrows at His feet; I am here to worship Him." Had not the spirit of faith from the altar embraced her? Was not her brow bedewed by the breath of the Comforter?

As we all have felt at times, Cecilia would have lingered when all was over. She dreaded the sunlight and the outside world; they might rob her of that one hour's peaceful repose. To her mind, the officiating priest was a prominent portion of the sacredness of the whole. Truly she had felt, at the "Dominus vobiscum," that a blessing had descended from his waving hands.

Therefore it was that Cecilia had expressed to her friend her satisfaction at the priest's absence from dinner. She would not like to see him come down from his high place to eat and drink like, and with, common sinners. It is to be supposed she would have had him laid away with the sacred vessels, with the flowers, and the vestments, or, rather, that she dwelt not particularly upon materialities. But, as far as faith was concerned, Cecilia Leigh that day had received its gift. She possessed it, however, half-unconsciously. Wherefore, conversations with Herbert or with Stella upon doctrines or practices of the Church became to her those only in which she felt interest to engage.

"I would like to arise and return to my Father's house," Cecilia had said on that first day before the altar. "I would kneel at my Mother's feet for pardon and love; I would be a Catholic." This assertion she oft repeated, varied but by this emanation: "All unworthy as I am!"

The addition of this latter clause may be well understood by one who knows what it is to have *become*

a Catholic. For, although all Catholics do not live up to the purity of their doctrines, and the requirements of Holy Church, no one more fully realizes the distance between himself and those requirements than he who is seeking the truth and finding the way. And, the nearer he approaches, the more trembling becomes his step. Not that he fears having mistaken the path, nor that he finds it dubious or wearisome. O, no! But in the wondrous light that floods him, he sees, clearer and more clear, the mighty shadow of his sins. Though at times disheartened he perseveres, and, kneeling at the threshold of his new-found Mother, learns to thank God for the light which has enabled him to discover, ere too late, the unsuspected blackness of his heart.

Several months passed. Winter had come, and Christmas was near at hand. Mrs. Mansfield was a famous observer of Christmas. The more so, that, in early life, she had never heard mention of such a day. She had been brought up to observe, or rather to enjoy the thanksgiving of the Puritans. And she had never, as child, or maiden, had the least idea that thanksgiving consisted of anything in the world but a sumptuous dinner. A dinner delayed until a late hour that one might be able to eat all the more.

As for Santa Claus coming down the chimney—she never heard of such a thing even as a romance. She would have been instructed in the wiles of witchcraft much sooner than in the sweet story of Christmas, which, most strange to say, her parents regarded

as a portion of that superstitious, lying tale, styled : “ Kingdom of anti-Christ.”

Blind inconsistency ! Whither was it anti-Christ to celebrate the day of His birth with prayer, praise, feasts, hymns and rejoicings, or whether it was not anti-Christ to so completely ignore the festival-day, as if no Saviour had been born into the world ?

Thus, Mrs. Mansfield, from the time of becoming an Episcopalian, to make amends for the past, could not do enough to make her Christmas glorious.

But what could she do *this* Christmas, away out in the wilderness, where a single *true* Church stood not ? Such beautiful pines were wasting their sweetness—how lovely ornaments they would be for the house of God on the day of the birth of Jesus : For so many years her hands had delighted to weave wreaths and garlands and sacred mottoes upon such occasions. Was the day of her usefulness over ? She sighed as she reflected that sadness would this year reign in Grace Church, in her former home.

She had recently been informed by a letter from Dr. Rand's own hand, that his wife, who had long been in ill health, had died with the leaves of Autumn. She recalled her voice, her merry laugh and winning ways, and could not possibly realize that she had passed away forever from fair, pic-nic, festival ; from the house of God and from the hearth of home. In her distress Mrs. Mansfield came to this conclusion : She would ornament her own house with evergreens. Her dinner should be a *Christmas*

dinner in every sense of that word. She would invite Mrs. Adair and her husband, also Dr. Stone and his lady, who, if they were not *Episcopalians*, *ought* to be, since she had taken such a liking for them. She would read over the Christmas service, Mrs. Adair giving responses, and she would write a long letter to Dr. Rand, which would be as good for her as to hear him preach. Perhaps this was her idea of communion with saints.

Christmas was to happen on Wednesday. Although Mrs. Mansfield had been making extensive preparations for ten days, when the Saturday night before Christmas came, she had really nothing perfected. For eggs and various ingredients of fruit cake she had sent to St. Paul—the articles had but just arrived. The mince-meat was packed in jars—but the barrel of apples was still at the depot. She had well-nigh burned her coffee instead of roasting it, and such loaves of poor bread had never before come out of *her* oven, she averred. Although so much of everything was under way, she had literally nothing prepared for Sunday.

“If I was back East,” she said to Mary in the kitchen, “I should expect visitors. You might be prepared for them fifty-one Sundays in the year, and they would never come; but, just let you be unprepared, and they pour in like a flood. However, out here nobody is likely to intrude. A snail in his shell is not more secure from interruption than are we in this house. Dear me! Not a pie, not a scrap of

cake—you might pick up the stale crumbs and we would have a pudding, only I can't spare an egg—barely six dozen!—nor a drop of milk. We shall get well starved for Christmas, I see plainly. You will have barely time to get ready for Mass, and I am too tired for anything. I am bruised from ankle to knee stumbling over the pines which that Norwegian threw about without the least regard to place. If he was unable to bring them before dark, Saturday night, I wish he had waited until Monday morning. Two huge trees are lying crosswise in the hall; they ought to be gotten out of the way, or be stood upright, 'before the house is full of ministers.' But no matter—let everything go, for once—I do believe my headache is coming on—" and with this long harangue, half-soliloquy, half-speech to Mary, Mrs. Mansfield sped to her room, swallowed several homœopathic morsels, and, with smelling bottle in hand, flung herself into her capacious chair.

By and by she put her room to rights, read her prayers, then, with Wilkie Collins' "Dead Alive" in her hand, threw herself upon the lounge; thence, gradually, from the deep mystery of the book, she fell into the deeper mystery of sleep.

Mrs. Mansfield was aroused by the opening and shutting of doors, and by the sound of voices below.

She sprang up, rubbed her eyes, and then proceeded to bathe her face.

"How long I must have slept! I wonder if Ambrose *did* kill that John Jogo; though I know

he didn't. The story is not one of the author's best; but, of course, Wilkie Collins can sometimes be stupid as well as other people. My hair is all in a muss, my collar crumpled, and my dressing gown—but I am not going to change; ah, Lois Mansfield, I scarcely know you; this living out West is enough to ruin one."

With this self-communion, the little lady descended the stairs and opened the parlor door.

Herbert sprang forward and caught her by the hand.

Turning her gently around, he presented her to a stranger.

"Father Carolan, my mother, Mrs. Mansfield."

Had Mrs. Mansfield possessed the least faculty for fainting, without doubt she would have fainted upon this occasion. Never having done such a thing in her life, she did the next best—took Herbert's proffered chair, and sat down, quite the picture of dismay.

Had Father Carolan been a little less stately and less distant, Mrs. Mansfield, who was wont to pride herself upon her frankness, would have come out and said something like the following, which, indeed, went flashing through her brain like streams of electricity:

"I expected you and made great preparations for you more than once. My house, my table, my dress were all in proper order. My speech was arranged, my unanswerable questions mustered. You have

caught me as Lois Mansfield was never before caught. My oration is flown ; my interrogations are like buried daggers. How is it ? Do Romish priests carry about with them the very spirit itself of mortification and penance, dropping it down remorselessly upon every poor soul they meet ? For never, never have I been so mortified."

For a minute or two the little lady evinced her painful embarrassment. Then, with a resolute "This will never do," she controlled herself, and assumed the manner of ease. She commenced a fluent conversation upon the boundless subject of the West, and of Kingston in particular, when, suddenly recollecting that the priest had not yet broken his fast, she excused herself and withdrew.

She found Mary in the kitchen, just completing her change of dress.

"Why did you not tell me your priest had come home with Herbert," she said reproachfully to the servant.

"And sure I did not know it. And he is here true enough, and no dinner starting yet," and, leaving the buttoning of her gown, she flew to making a fire.

"We've nothing on earth to eat," exclaimed the mistress despairingly.

"There's plenty for *him* to eat, if 'twas only ready or half ready," returned Mary.

"There's no time to cook a turkey"—two fowls of this kind had come from St. Paul with the various other things.

“We can cut off slices and fry,” suggested Mary; “Or there’s the nice ham, and we *could* break into the eggs,” she added.

“But not a pie, a pudding, or a crumb of cake. If we only had the apples here, I could make a pie, and a mince pie, too. Who ever before heard of one’s dinner being scattered to the four corners?” cried the perplexed woman.

“I don’t think the priest would taste a pie or a cake if you had a bushel,” urged Mary, who here cut a gash in her finger, in such haste was she paring her potatoes.

“That don’t matter—he will discover the nakedness of the land. Did I not say this morning that the house was in a condition topsy turvey enough for visitors? I am rightly punished. Whoever allows her house to become a bear’s den, should not be astonished when bears enter.” Mrs. Mansfield looked at Mary as she emphasized this last sentence.

Mary returned the gaze, allowing the knife to remain a moment motionless between the potato and the twisted cuticle. She hurriedly continued her labor, when Mrs. Mansfield remarked:

“I do not insinuate that any one is a bear. I intend to affirm that my house, in its present state, is fit only for bears.”

After the lapse of an hour or so, dinner was ready to serve. In addition to slices of turkey and ham, with the eggs which Mary had suggested, was a steaming dish of oysters, fresh peaches,

and various *et caeteras*, all which might well have satisfied the generality of housekeepers; but not the fastidious Mrs. Mansfield.

“Shall I change my dress,” asked Mrs. Mansfield of her own self; “I have been seen in my dishabille; had I best carry out the role of a dowdy? No; not out of respect for myself!” she decided, energetically, and hurried to her room. There was time but for a most hasty toilet. She gave a sorrowful glance at her pretty boots—they could not be donned. Scorning the thought of her black satin, she arrayed herself in a simple merino, pinned a snowy frill about her neck, smoothed her front hair with her palm, tucked under her tiny cap a stray curl or two, and, taking a fresh handkerchief, descended to the dining room.

Previous to this, however, she had tapped at Cecilia’s door.

“Did you come home before Herbert,” she demanded.

“Yes; not perceiving Herbert as I came out, I returned with Mary,” was the reply.

“Then you do not know that he has brought the priest with him, and that, of all days in the world, he is to be here this day to dinner.”

“Indeed, I was not aware of it,” Cecilia returned.

“The saints defend us! I can never say again that I don’t know what it is to be drawn through a knot hole. But come; I shall not be five minutes at my toilet. Be ready to go down;” and the little

lady had vanished like a shadow. Mrs. Mansfield's "nothing to eat" was kindred to Miss McFlimsey's "nothing to wear." She began to think so herself before dinner was over. At least, Mary's hint was correct that the priest would not care for pastry. He partook neither of the prune pie nor of the currant jelly tarts.

Perceiving these dishes refused, Mrs. Mansfield exclaimed :

"What, no dessert! But I have understood it to be one of your vows, Mr. Carolan, to abstain from all such vanities in the way of food."

The reverend priest looked up with a smile.

"If they are vanities, should they not be abstained from?" he questioned.

"Ah, it all hangs upon that 'if.' Were the whole world to take a vote, the subjunctive mood would yield overwhelmingly to the indicative; essentials, instead of vanities, would be the term employed."

"Admitting your assertion, this is one of those cases in which the minority may still preserve its own opinion. Taste governs most people in the choice of food; and you know the universal maxim, 'there should be no disputing about taste.'"

"O, I remember that in the original—*De gustibus non disputandum est.* We should none of us deem you pedantic, though you were to quote Latin at this table. To you Romanists, the language of Rome must be as a native tongue. For, I suppose, among the learned, even in that Italian city, the Latin is

more spoken than the modern tongue. Probably you have been at Rome?"

The priest bowed.

Here the conversation turned upon the wonders of the Eternal City, in which Mrs. Mansfield became so interested that she forgot to arise as a signal for adjournment. Suddenly recollecting herself, she observed laughingly :

" Well, we have remained at the table until we might be supposed hungry again ; if not —" and rising, she led the way to the parlor.

" I suppose you are aware, Mr. Carolan, that you have another convert in our friend, Miss Leigh ? " she resumed, as she took a seat upon the sofa beside Cecilia.

" Not aware of it, certainly. Your son informed me to-day that she was reading, and had become interested in his books," returned the priest.

" And do you not consider that the next thing to conversion ? More than one of your authors asserts that one has but to make a study of Romanism in order to become favorably convinced."

" I dare say *you* will not subscribe to that," remarked the priest, pointedly.

" I will not. I can confidently assert that I am an exception."

" But, mother, may I ask what Catholic books you have read ? " inquired Herbert.

" None that are strictly Romish, I admit," she replied, intent upon ever using that word in place of

Catholic. "But," she added, "from our own books of controversy we cannot help becoming acquainted with the course of arguments Romanists usually adopt."

"Suppose, mother, you read my books—those that I received the other day from the 'Catholic Publication Society'; you could then speak with more confidence and correctness."

"That will I never do, Herbert," she replied with firmness. "I, too, have taken vows," she added, slowly and solemnly.

"Vows?" repeated the son.

"Yes," continued the mother, and with so great earnestness that her voice trembled; "I have vowed never again to enter a Romish church, never to read a Romish book, and never to hold a religious argument with a Romanist."

Mrs. Mansfield's little speech was followed by perfect silence.

It is needless to record that each of her three listeners was shocked.

"She has shut herself out from Heaven," was the startled thought of the priest.

"She has committed the unpardonable sin," was the painful mental ejaculation of her son.

"God can cancel even such an unholy vow," Cecilia said softly, striving to hide her surprise in the pity she deeply felt.

Mrs. Mansfield, who had spoken with sudden impulse, became instantly seized with confusion and re-

gret. Not that she had spoken untruth; she had really made that vow, in a kneeling attitude, the book of Common Prayer between her folded hands. But she saw at once that in this presence, the presence of three of the faith, she should not have made mention of it.

At this moment, the door softly opened, and Mary wished to speak with her mistress.

Regarding this as a providential interposition, she made her excuses and withdrew.

Herbert, deeply hurt, for the moment could not rally.

The priest took this earliest opportunity of drawing his chair somewhat nearer to Cecilia, and engaging her in conversation.

Of course, he had but one subject to discourse upon, and in her mind was but one to which to listen and respond.

After an uninterrupted converse of an hour, the surprised priest became convinced that he had no pupil to instruct. She had been an apt scholar, he thought, and had learned Catholicity "without a master." She had applied herself *con amore*, and no difficulties remained. He had thought to entrap her in the catechism, but he found she knew it perfectly.

He reflected. At length he said :

" You have an object in this thorough study of Catholic doctrine. It is a study dry and tedious, except to minds intent upon discovering divine truths, and to hearts inflamed with love to God. Am I to infer, that, having received the gift of Faith, and

having found your way to the threshold of the true Church, you wish to enter by Holy Baptism?"

At this question a dimness spread over the violet eyes before so illuminated, and they drooped beneath their long lashes.

Cecilia's mind was wandering to that one great gulf—Confession—over which she fancied it would be impossible for her to cross.

But, as had come to her the gift of faith, almost unasked, so suddenly and overwhelmingly also came upon her a willingness, nay, a desire, to tell all to this priest of God. At least she must tell him this—that she had already, by baptism, become a child of the Church. After some moments of hesitation, she said:

"I am not in the habit of speaking of myself, but I am not unwilling to say to you that at a very early age I crossed the sea with my mother. When in sight of New York, our boat went in pieces. With others, my mother was drowned. A sailor rescued me from a watery grave. I was adopted by a childless widow—Mrs. Leigh, who was to me a good and faithful mother. She was a Roman Catholic, and had me reared in the same faith. She had been a convert, however, from Protestantism; and, although she remained socially attached to her Protestant friends, they had no sympathy whatever with her religious views. My associations, therefore, were principally with those outside the Church—those, too, who not only, for the most part, cherished no

religious beliefs, but who treated lightly and with disdain any reference to sincere faith in Church or in a hereafter. You can imagine, then, that long before my adopted mother was aware, I had been led astray from duty, and formed associations seriously detrimental to my religious faith. Circumstances—"here Cecilia hesitated.

The priest looked at his watch, and, rising, said :

"It is already past my hour for a previous engagement, but I would be failing seriously in my sense of duty, were I to leave without urging upon you a speedy and penitent return to the fold of that Church, which, as a tender mother, most gladly welcomes that which was lost. During the following two weeks, will you prepare for your religious duties?"

"By God's good grace I will, and with all my heart," was Cecilia's answer.





CHAPTER XIV.

PASSING THE RUBICON.

AFEARFUL snow storm blockaded the roads to such an extent, that it was impossible for the Priest to reach Kingston on the next Mass-day. In two weeks after, when again he came, Cecilia was laid up with an attack of old-fashioned quinzy. In short, one thing or another occurred, so that it was two months before the priest had another opportunity of conversing with Cecilia. It was Saturday that he sought Herbert at his office, who accompanied him to his mother's house.

Mrs. Mansfield received him politely, although she declared to herself that she did not like him. Conscious that in his presence she had expressed herself in an unlady-like manner, she suspected he could have but little respect for her.

Writing to Dr. Rand, Mrs. Mansfield had told him of her promise, or vow, as she termed it, at the same time expressing her regret for having repeated it in presence of three Catholics, one a priest, all in her own house. She had instinctively obeyed a natural inclination to reveal a fault, or source of trouble to the only person whom she deemed her superior.

In doing this, she satisfied that innate prompting to Confession, for the safety and sacredness of which our Heavenly Father has provided in the Holy Sacrament of Penance. But Mrs. Mansfield was proud; she would not admit even to Herbert and Cecilia, much less to the Romish priest, that she had suffered regret.

Cecilia's misgivings had multiplied since her conversation with Father Carolan. They all sprang, however, from one idea that daily grew to her more frightful—that of Confession. There was no alternative; if she returned within the fold of the Church she would be obliged to face that awful tribunal. What! Reveal the secret that she had guarded so closely? Unveil the heart that had so far strayed, the mind that had so wilfully misunderstood, and willingly perverted the divine truths of religion? Unfold the fact that she was wife of one who was an infidel and a free-lover, that greatest foe and contemner of the true Church? That she had married him, knowing him to be such? Ah! here was her greatest shame and confusion! Next to an outcast was she in the eyes of the Church. At least, thus Cecilia thought.

But she was disposed to reflect more severely upon herself than was necessary. She had been lawfully married by the priest of the church. Yet the fact that she silently became tainted with her husband's notions troubled her conscience excessively. She remembered, however, that our Savior had spoken

kindly to one convicted of greater sin. If Christ were on earth, kneeling she would touch the hem of His garment, believing she might be made whole. She longed for a voice to say unto her: "Go in peace—thy sins are forgiven thee."

The enemy of souls had confused and blinded Cecilia. Else of herself she would have perceived what appeared clear after a brief exposition from the priest. In this second interview with Father Carolan, Cecilia felt a delicacy even in making allusion to the subject that was tormenting her. The experienced servant of God, however, by skillful questioning, drew it forth with so apparent artlessness as to surprise his neophyte. Assenting to his truthful suspicions, and recovering from her amazement, she intently listened to his words.

"You admit it is the subject of Confession that is disturbing you. That is because you are allowing yourself to receive suggestions from the author of evil, rather than admonitions of Holy Church. You confess that, were our Divine Lord yet upon earth, you would rejoice to fall at His feet and reveal to Him, as if He knew not already, all the secrets of your soul. You would be quite at rest and happy, could He raise above your head His Divine hand in blessing, and you could hear Him say: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Once in Christ's Church, and this becomes to you no useless yearning. But you are not a stranger in the Confessional. Once you must often have received the grace of the Sacrament of Penance."

Cecilia answered : “ I was but a child then, and thought as a child. I was in an Eden of innocence ; since then I have strayed into the wide, wide world. I have to seek my Mother Church, I have to find our Lord anew.”

To which the priest rejoined :

“ Though He dwells not bodily upon earth, He is not dead, nor is He yet separated from His disciples. Though He has arisen, and sitteth in glory at the right hand of the Father, yet we, the priests of His Church, look up to Him lovingly and confidently, holding fast His promise, ‘ I am with you to the consummation of the world.’

“ It was no portion of the plan of salvation that our Divine Redeemer should remain upon earth. Having taught His doctrines to His chosen apostles, and having established His Church, having wrought miracles, and proved His Divinity, He was ready to return to the Father. But what did He first do ? He confirmed Peter that he might be strong to feed His sheep—to feed His lambs. He gave to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, with the assurance that whatsoever he should bind or loose on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven. He breathed upon His disciples, saying : ‘ Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye forgive, shall be forgiven ; whosoever sins ye retain, shall be retained.’ He would have them teach all nations, doing all things which He had commanded. He would not leave them comfortless, but would send the Holy Spirit, which should teach them all truth.

“ When Jesus ascended into heaven, and was lost to mortal sight of the Apostles, did they have a thought that He was still ‘with them?’ When they raised the dead, cast out lepers, or pronounced forgiveness of sin, were not their works efficacious, as done in His name? Had He not said to them, ‘As My Father hath sent Me, so do I send you?’ Stand they not, then, in His place?

“ Young woman, what doth Christ’s Church say to you to-day?—I hold my Divine Founder’s promise fresh throughout the centuries. I repeat it anew to my priests as they pass beneath my consecrating hand. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Receive the power to forgive or to retain sin.—You believe in the Church; act, then, up to your belief. Remember the Confessional was made for sinners. There all have to kneel, priest and bishop, as well as people, for all have sinned. If you chance to think it is but the priest who listens to and absolves you, recall to mind the power that has been given him. The command to you to do penance is not more binding upon your conscience than is the commission to forgive sins upon that of the confessor. Regard him not, then, as man, but Christ’s anointed, who is working for you the ‘miracle of pardon.’ Think it is our Divine Lord who absolves you, who cleanses you in this sacrament as with His blood, who blesses you, and bids you go in peace.”

“ I could do that—yes—I could do that,” said Cecilia, musingly, still preserving the impression she

had first received of Father Carolan, that, though he were not God, he was one who dwelt in the ‘shadow of His presence.’

“I understand; it is very clear to me now; there would be no difficulty but for one thing. Suppose one has a secret which is wished to be known only to God,” said Cecilia, faintly.

“It is natural for one to wish all his sins to be known only to God. That is our usual mode of expression—‘known only to God!’ In reality, we should prefer that all the world should know them, rather than our just Judge at Heaven’s Court. You must know, however, that what the priest knows under the seal of Confessional, in a sense, may be said to be known by God alone.”

“Yes—but I will tell you—for it weighs upon me like an incubus. I have left home and friends. I neither expect nor desire to behold either again. My future life is to be entirely separate and distinct from the past. I would like never to see again the person who knows the cause which has driven me hither. I would have to tell you, and I cannot. The flush passed out of Cecilia’s face leaving it very white.

“You distress yourself unnecessarily,” returned the priest. “Even admitting Confession to be painful, which it should not be to the soul that loves to obey its Lord, the very pain should be offered up as an atonement for the sin. God has ordained that sin shall be followed by punishment. The more difficulty one experiences in Confession, the stronger should be

the resolution to keep nothing back. God loves the cheerful giver. To him who cries, ‘I am most heartily sorry that I have offended Thee in the commission of this sin, which I am willing to confess to Thy minister,’ He is ready to grant His pardon.”

Cecilia clasped her hands and raised her eyes to those of the priest. A new light glowed therein, and a sudden enthusiasm thrilled her voice :

“I am ready now. The scales have fallen from my eyes. I was not willing to endure one mortification, one pain for Him who died for me. I would have walked into the church as into a garden, partaking of its delights, refreshed with its comforts, I who am so unworthy—so unworthy even to suffer for His sake! I can perform every duty now. It is too little, too trifling—God forgive me!”

When, two weeks later, Cecilia made her confession, and received Holy Communion, meditating upon the peace and joy that filled her soul, she wondered greatly at her previous dread and confusion. She dismissed thoughts of them, however, recalling and coinciding with the remark of Father Carolan that “they had been permitted by God to agitate her for the good of her soul.”

At the period of Herbert Mansfield’s reception in the Church, but little had been said by the good people of Kingston. Having been already an Episcopalian, his leap into Catholicity had not been considered very grand or dangerous. To sectarians the difference consisted principally in this: that while Episcopalianism included the rich, and prided itself

upon its title of "Aristocratic Church," Catholicity included the poor and rested quiet in its obscurity. That they greatly erred in both conclusions does not concern us. But the outcry that was made at the so supposed "conversion" of Cecilia Leigh does concern us somewhat.

A "sociable" convened at Mrs. Gough's on the Wednesday following the startling report that Miss Leigh had united with the Catholic Church. It would be expecting too much of human nature to suppose that, at such an assemblage, so unaccountable a proceeding on the part of a young lady, laying claims to sense, should not receive comment and criticism.

"I declared our children should not go to school another day, and I kept them at home Monday and Tuesday; but they took on so, and made themselves so miserable, that I allowed them to go to-day. I really had to do so in self-defence. It is a great comfort having children out of the house for six hours in the twenty-four."

In this expression of her grievance, Mrs. Carter paused not to reflect that she had utterly ignored all consideration of any *principle* involved. Indeed, this became equally noticeable in the remarks of her associates.

"Well, I am not sure but I will have to let mine go back again," said Mrs. Smith. "Dolly and Lizzie think there was never such a teacher before, and they were really learning very fast. Abe and Jim keep

the house in such an uproar that I am nearly distracted, and I was thinking to-day that I must send them back."

"I wish you would," promptly commenced Mrs. Jones; "if you will, I will start mine again. It seems the committee are not going to turn her out unless she begins to teach the children some of her new church mummeries."

"It is not likely she will do that if she knows what is for her interest," interposed Mrs. Gough. "True, if I had children, I should much prefer to send them to a good Babbist"—this lady had a habit of thus pronouncing Baptist—"teacher, but, as I have not, it does not matter. I am surprised, though, that Miss Leigh could have expected to retain her position for one day, after uniting herself with the Irish Church."

"I wonder who she expects to associate with? Nobody but the low Irish, of course! and they are, perhaps, just as good as she is. Who knows who Miss Leigh, anyhow, or where she came from?" questioned Mrs. Carter, glancing about with evil eyes.

"If the truth was known, without doubt some Irish Catholic blood would be found in her veins. People don't jump right out of society, unless they have some natural proclivities for the low and vulgar." This was spoken by Mrs. Green, the woman we have formerly mentioned as having a slight twist in her figure. As she spoke with energy, the deformity became more conspicuous and distorted than was usual.

"But don't you know—haven't you heard a reason for her joining the Catholics?" cried Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith trod upon Mrs. Jones' toes, and, with her sharp elbow, made a black and blue spot upon Mrs. Green's arm; whereupon Miss Allen, across the room, gave a titter, and Mrs. Simpson made use of the ejaculation: "You better believe we have!"

"Of course, everybody knows it is to make sure of Herbert Mansfield," cried one.

"Mrs. Mansfield says nay to that. I have it from Mrs. Berry, the Presbyterian minister's wife. Mrs. Berry says that she heard Mrs. Stone say that Mrs. Adair told her that Herbert and Miss Leigh would never make a match," asserted another.

"It won't be her fault, I imagine," quoth Mrs. Carter.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Gough, "Mrs. Mansfield appears to think a great deal of Miss Leigh."

"She may think well of her as a friend—not as a daughter-in-law," was spoken, in high tone, from a far corner of the room.

"They do say, though, that Miss Leigh is quite indifferent to the young lawyer, save in a friendly way," came, in somewhat stifled tones, from a woman who was in an uncomfortable position, cutting and basting on the carpet.

"I have heard the same," came from another part. "Moreover, I've heard of other reasons for Miss Leigh's going over to such a heathish church."

"So have I," "and I, too," became general.

"And I reckon we all have, and a more likely reason than that she wants to get Herbert Mansfield for a husband," spoke, boastfully, Mrs. Simpson.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Gough, looking across to the speaker; "I have been ill, and have not been out the house since Sunday. Pray, what can it be?"

A general uplifting of eyes and sundry sly winks followed. Also, the processes of toe-treading and elbow-hunching were repeated, to the great hurt of corns, and imminent danger of lock-jaw through needle-sticking.

At length the momentary silence was broken by one bolder than the rest.

"They do say that she is in love with the priest."

"Hush! hist!" and an ominous silence followed; for, that moment entered Mrs. Adair, Mrs. Mansfield and Miss Leigh.

The speaker's back had been turned to the door, which, on account of the closeness of the room, had been left ajar. Her loudly-uttered assertions had been distinctly heard by the late-comers.

Mrs. Adair's face wore a sarcastic smile, Mrs. Mansfield's one of disdainful irony. Cecilia's alone remained placid and undisturbed.

"Busy at gossip, as usual. If you have only that to employ yourselves, I, for one, had better go home again, where I have left lots of work," spoke the first of these ladies.

"Plenty of work for your nimble fingers, Mrs. Adair. We cannot afford to lose your skillful services," said Mrs. Jones, placing a pile of patchwork in the other's extended hands.

"It should be well understood, that, according to our by-laws, no gossip is allowed in our sociable. I

regret if anyone has allowed herself to become forgetful of this important rule, the more particularly in my house," remarked Mrs. Gough meekly, though with severity in her tones.

"People should never be about, hearing what was not intended for their ears, should they, Mrs. Gough?" questioned Mrs. Mansfield. "However, words do not kill, although, like bullets, they do sometimes bound, and wound," she added.

Mrs. Carter cast a malignant glance at the woman of the house, the honorable president of the society, speaking with emphasis the following:

"If all the gossiping words were gathered up that have been spoken here this afternoon, and apportioned to the mouths from which they have fallen, there is no doubt but that each and every mouth would be equally full—gossip properly distributed; the truth is, north winds should never tell south winds not to blow."

Mrs. Gough raised not her eyes from her work, but the poppies in her cheeks grew into deepest-dyed peonies, and her wiry curls trembled. She dared not, however, by so much as a word, provoke another speech from the unscrupulous woman.

More than enough of the Kingston sociable. It was Miss Leigh's second visit; it proved, also, to be her last. Not altogether on account of the stinging words that had met her ear—though, that they had done so, she gave token—but she discovered ere long, that to a Catholic a sectarian sociable was a place prohibited.



CHAPTER XV.

MRS. CARTER'S TEA-PARTY.

MRS. CARTER returned home from the sociable very much disgusted. She wished in her heart that the Episcopal ladies, the Catholic lady, Mrs. Stone and one or two others, would stay away, henceforth and forever. They were altogether too exalted—stuck-up was the term she really used—for the rest of them. The moment either of their ladyships appeared, any little harmless gossip had to cease, and general dullness would prevail.

“I am not going to put up with it—I will not be repeatedly snubbed in this manner; I will organize a new sociable, and have for members just whom I have a mind. I will get Mr. Marston to draw up the constitution and by-laws, and I will invite him and them over to a tea-party to-morrow, and have it all arranged. To keep peace, I will invite that hateful Mrs. Gough—for I know she won’t join in it—but not a word shall get to the ears of those people who walk on stilts, their heads among the clouds. If Mrs. Gough was not a Baptist, not a word would I say to her about it, but so many of our ladies would think they must do first as she says, so I am obliged

to conciliate. Talk about brotherly and sisterly love in the Church! It is all nonsense."

This was the conclusion to which Mrs. Carter came even before she had reached her home. There she found her pastor, Mr. Marston, awaiting her. To him she proposed her grief and plans, and from him received most hearty co-operation.

"It was really out of the question now," he argued, "since Kingston had so much increased in population, for all classes and creeds to mingle. Let the Methodist and Baptist ladies unite and have a church society of their own. He would not object to being president himself. Yes, that was a capital idea. All the ladies would be drawn off from the other society which would thus die a natural death. The Presbyterians would be thus cut off from receiving the greater share of the proceeds, as they had hitherto done, and they might join, if they pleased, with the pharisaical Episcopalians and the Romish convert."

Little Martha Carter was at once dispatched with invitations to to-morrow's tea-party.

The morrow came, and, with it, about twenty ladies gathered about Mrs. Carter's table. Mrs. Gough, suspicious of the movement, sent regrets that "a headache detained her from making a happy member of her dear friend's, Mrs. Carter's, delightful company."

Mr. Marston presided. It cannot be said that he presided with dignity, from the fact that he was utterly deficient in that ministerial quality. Nevertheless, he presided, laughing, jesting, gay as the merriest.

The by-laws had been drawn up and subscrbed before the announcement of tea. The society was to be known by the name of "Ladies' Independent Aid Society of the Baptist and Methodist Churches of Kingston." Rev. Mr. Marston, President and Treasurer; Mrs. Carter, Vice-President and Secretary. One by-law declared that no *un-orthodox* member should be admitted, and no *un-orthodox* person be invited by any member to so much as one attendance, under penalty of fine and reprimand.

Another by-law declared all subjects of conversation to be lawful which might contribute to the amusement and enjoyment of the members—for the good of community, neighborhood scandals might be discussed, and social evils con-avoided. Moreover, the list of by-laws closed with the 21st, which read as follows:

"And, furthermore, that all things may be done decently and in order, it is hereby decreed and ordained that every meeting of the said 'Ladies Independent Aid Society of the Baptist and Methodist Churches of Kingston' shall be closed with a short prayer by the Rev. President, and that, immediately thereafter, the ladies shall depart, each unto her own house."

"As the ladies are mostly pledged to temperance, I have placed wine upon the table for yourself alone, Mr. Marston," observed Mrs. Carter.

"Very well, all the more for myself," returned that gentleman gaily. "I am fond of wine, but then

I know how to do without it upon occasion. When I was quite young—the first year I entered upon the ministry, in fact—I was stationed in a place where temperance had gained quite a foothold. Among the Baptist members, teetotallers prevailed. They had fallen out with their former minister for the reason he did not go it strong enough on the liquor question. They wished him to preach it on Sundays and week-days. He had the imprudence to tell them that he thought he ought to preach the Gospel as well as temperance. He was obliged to leave. Fortunately, I became aware of this, and, on my trial month, shouted *temperance*, until I was truly thirsty for another subject, and for something a little stronger than cold water. However, I was invited one day to General Oglethorpe's. Now, General Oglethorpe was a very wealthy man, and an aristocrat. He was the great man of the town. He had a very handsome wife and several beautiful daughters. To be invited to his house was an honor worth reckoning upon. We sat down to the most sumptuous dinner. Choicest viands, rarest fruits, and everything the most *recherché*."

The Rev. gentleman's pronunciation of the last word was inimitable. After gazing about to satisfy himself that his listeners were overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness that had fallen upon him, he proceeded :

“ Amongst the rest, the General had not been forgetful of his wine-cellar. I could not enumerate the

varieties of wine that graced his board. The sight was tempting. But I glanced around me. Several of our church-members were present. It would not do for me to raise a glass even to my lips. Should I sit there, and behold others partake of the sparkling nectar, myself denied of a drop? No, I would be no Tantalus, I assure you. A happy thought struck me. I could make a *virtue* of necessity. I could make an heroic stand that should redound to my credit, and exalt me upon a pinnacle of admiration for my church people. I acted upon this inspiration, for such I may term it, since it resulted so successfully. Laying down knife and fork, I commenced folding my napkin.

“‘I beg your pardon, General, but my principles will not allow of my tasting food from your table while the *worm of the still* is, at the same time, resting there.’

“My church members gazed at me admiringly. The General’s particular friends looked at me with a frown, which I returned with boldness. But the General bowed low, and ordered a waiting-man to transfer decanters and goblets to a side-table. For me, that was a master-stroke of policy. My strong temperance position became known abroad, and I was elected pastor of the Framingham Baptist church without a dissentant voice. And yet, there was not a day but I had wine in my room. There is nothing like policy. Policy rules the world.”

The self-elected president of the new society again

glanced around to meet the admiring eyes of twenty-one women, having probably forgotten to inform his audience that a very prying landlady had discovered the secret of his intemperance, and had caused him to be expelled his pastorate ere his first year had expired.

Miss Leigh's conversion having been introduced as the succeeding topic of coversation, another opportunity was afforded the now exhilarated reverend gentleman for making an edifying speech.

"I know nothing of Miss Leigh," he commenced; "have merely seen her a few times. But, since she has chosen to go where she has, we don't any of us need to know anything more about her than we do. Popery is that sink of perdition into which we wish to incur no risk of falling by looking after those who have disappeared beneath its seething waves. She will rue the day she ever abandoned herself to such a delusion. But she'll have to stick to it. Popery's claws are more sure than a lion's. Besides, there's not a doubt but that God says of such as she, as He did of one of old: 'Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.' When one and another of the sheep go in that way over to the wolves, they form that class which God gives up to a reprobate mind, that they may believe lies and be damned. I know all about the iniquities of Popery. It is rightly called the Beast. Where I have lived in Ohio and Illinois, I have been stationed in neighborhoods of nunneries. More than once I've been appointed on investigating committees, and—let me tell you—whew!"

Prolonging this last word into something like a whistle, the new president drained his glass, and again, from the decanter, brimmed it full. Twirling about his glass with thumb and forefinger, he gazed up and then down the length of the table.

While the eyes of some were bent upon their plates, more were fastened eagerly upon the face of their pastor, anxiously awaiting still further revelations from their oracle.

What he was about to add, however, was left unspoken. For Mrs. Carter, who had once before listened to this same strain, thought ears were present which more extended statements might offend; she therefore diverted the minister's mind by detailing the conversation of the previous day, and how it came to a sudden close by the entrance of Miss Leigh, who must have overheard a very unpalatable remark.

The minister laughed heartily. His goblet had again become drained, and the wine was making him over-merry.

"All right," he exclaimed, loudly, rubbing his hands vigorously with his napkin, "glad she heard it. Glad she was obliged to listen to one truth after she had swallowed such a mass of errors. But there's another reason for Miss Leigh's going over. They do say that half-breed girl's father, Lancaster's going to die. He inherits a big fortune from his wife's father, who was a French trader. The girl and Miss Leigh have become bosom friends. The girl and her

father are Catholics. If Miss Leigh could marry the old man, you see, he would soon 'kick the bucket,' and Miss Leigh, who, they say, is poor as dirt, would be provided for. Then she could marry young Mansfield if she wanted to, and carry on any other innocent flirtation at the same time. There's nothing like having strings enough to one's bow. There's no doubt a deal of truth in each and all these reasons."

Mrs. Carter smiled approvingly; Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Green whispered to each other, and then simpered aloud; while Mrs. Simpson assured Mrs. Jones that "the Catholics were such sly, deep, dark creatures, that, after you had heaped upon them all the most opprobrious epithets in the world, instead of having received their due, they were still deserving of more."

Miss Allen declared that her grandmother had had two Catholic servant girls who were absolutely witches and ought to have been hanged; and she went on to illustrate.

Mrs. Pendleton made statements that her mother had often discovered her servants to be guilty of theft, and, upon questioning them, had been assured that they had paid the priest a quarter for an indulgence to steal.

"There is not a shadow of doubt about such things," hastily asserted Mrs. Morrow, lest she should fail of a chance to speak. "The poor girls are not so much to blame; they are taught these things from their childhood up. They pay out half their wages

for confessions and indulgences. And if they are the least stingy of their money, the priest gives them an awful penance. Just think of walking about the house all day with hard peas in your shoes. And this I know to be a fact. My Bridget was cooking something sly over the stove one day. ‘What are you doing?’ I said, ‘what have you in the skillet?’ Bridget’s face grew red, and she would have tossed the whole in the ashes, if I had not commanded and insisted. And what do you think? The poor thing was boiling peas, to make them soft, she said, so she could get around without their hurting so bad. She had been to confession the day before, and that horrid priest had told her to wear peas in her shoes for a month. I told her she was a fool, and that he was the one who should wear the peas as long as he lived.”

“He ought to be made to play lively between a fork and a gridiron,” remarked the minister, perfectly aware that this woman’s story was but a revision of something he had read so often that it had become stale.

Mrs. Morrow, pausing not to reflect that she had manufactured a wilful falsehood, utterly unconscious that, at the judgment-day, she would have to meet it again, face to face, cast about a satisfied glance at her companions, folded her napkin, and leaned back complacently in her chair.

The conversation was for some time longer continued, but, as it was in the same strain, it deserves not repetition.

The foregoing has been given only to show how thoughtfully slanderous words are taken up and propagated, and how floating falsehoods against the Church are seized, enlarged, petted into growth and fixedness, until they become mountains of error, hiding the truth that still steadily gleams as from God's Eternal Throne.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE "PROTRACTED MEETING."

THE newly-formed sociable, the Ladies Independent Society, increased and flourished.

Even Mrs. Gough was fain to become a member, else she would have been alone "like a solitary sparrow upon a house-top." Mrs. Berry disengaged herself from her five boys for the space of three hours every Wednesday, and joined her voice with the rapidly increasing tirade against the subject of Catholicism. Mrs. Pry discarded her invalid's wrapper, had a new dress made, dropped off her burthen of cares and anxieties, and, standing once more erect, joined the feminine crowd. For, probably, it would still be termed feminine, although it had a masculine head.

From week to week the excitement grew more and more intense. Each mistress of the house carried home weekly a firebrand, which she preserved not in ashes, but which she scattered abroad. Men and children began to have presentiments that something dreadful was about to happen.

Surely, they argued, the wrath of Heaven must be ready to fall upon the Catholic Church! Why did it not come down upon such an abomination and sweep

it from the earth? Catholics began to be regarded with horror, and they might have suffered the fate of the Salem witches, had not the habit prevailed in the nineteenth century of stabbing and hanging with pointed sneers, and coiled, serpent-like words, instead of with daggers and ropes, as of old.

There came, at length, a development, which proved also a denouement. Rev. Mr. Marston, in order the better to counteract the effect of Cecilia Leigh's perversion to Romanism, got up a protracted meeting, which was every day to continue into the night; if men, women and children of Kingston, and of the country round about, became not enlightened as to the snares and abominations of Popery it should be no fault of the Calvinistic preacher, enthusiastic as he was diminutive and bigoted, and, we may add, ignorant, upon the one great subject of church history.

The Protestant portion of Kingston, being already aroused, turned out *en masse*. In the hatred of Catholicity, all minor differences were forgotten. The Methodist minister and his two or three brethren-exhorters, who had heretofore looked sourly askance at brother Marston, now shook him warmly by the hand, hailing him as a co-laborer in the great work of destroying Satan's Kingdom, i. e., the Catholic Church. Mr. Berry, rigid Presbyterian though he was, entered the pulpit with Mr. Marston and Mr. Pry, and looked down placidly upon his congregation, lovingly interspersed with close-commu-

nionists, and those who called themselves Wesleyans. Alas! John Wesley could not have known his own no more than could Luther those who fondly proclaimed themselves his followers.

These pastors, and these sheep, united, at least, upon one point, besieged heaven with vociferous supplications that the Almighty God would rain down destruction upon this enemy, this anti-Christ in their midst. Was the ear of God heavy that it could not hear? Was His arm shortened that it could not strike as erst it struck the wicked cities of the plain with the besom of His wrath? Was it to live, and thrive, and win souls until the day of judgment? Should the monster of Rome lift up its hydra head here, there, and everywhere, even in free America, and gather within its Briarean arms the fair, the wise, the good?

Blasphemous invocations! hearing which, the Catholic, even the most lowly and unlearned, would fall on his knees, nay, on his face in the dust, hoping by his prayers and humility to make amends for their arrogance, by his reverent abasement to make reparation for the insults offered to the offended majesty of his Sovereign Lord. Yea; the humblest unlettered Catholic child of God could say to those self-righteous pretenders, God is God, and He hath not chosen thee for His prophet. God is God, and He chose Mary for the Mother of His Divine Son. Inseparable from the God-head, Jesus Christ, our Blessed Lord, founded His Church upon His chosen twelve, Himself being

the chief corner-stone. He said to this Church, "I give you the Spirit of Truth. You are its ground and pillar. I will be with you to the end of the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against you." Kings, tyrants, demons, in the shape of men, have fought against this Church, millions of martyrs have poured forth their blood for her. Her own children, apostate and rebellious, have lifted against her sacrilegious hand, fearfully wounding the mother that corrected them in kindness. Not Arius, nor Eutychus, nor any of the early heretics, more than Huss, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, or Knox have crushed out the Church of God. Not Gavazza, nor Dollinger, nor Hyacinthe, nor one and all striving, as with the very battering-rams of hell, have prevailed against her. Shall the will, and wish and prayers of Messrs. Berry, Marston and Pry prove more efficacious than those of thousands of inglorious worthies whose names notoriously blacken history's page?

What! Pray to God that He will destroy His own Church? That He will recognize Luther, or Henry VIII, or Elizabeth, or Calvin, or Jonathan Edwards, or Wesley, or Emperor William, or Bismarck, or Victor Emmanuel as the founders of *His* Church? God is God, and finite man may not dictate to the infinite. The Catholic has an anchor sure and steadfast. He remains in the ark that has triumphantly surmounted the raging billows of almost twenty centuries. He abides with those who have remained securely within her loving walls. He heeds not

those, who, from pride and envy, have gone out from her and made unto themselves leaky vessels, calling out with voice and trumpet each and every one: "We are the ship cast by God upon the waters. Look at the worn-out ark, old and decrepit, sinking from its heavy weight of corruption and sin." The Catholic, calm and secure, looks out from his stronghold upon hundreds of such tiny crafts, knowing they will, each and all, one after another, be engulfed in the billowy waves, like many a predecessor, while others, as ill-fated, but dauntless and defiant, arise up to take their places.

Mrs. Carter lost not a moment from these meetings, nor a word from both preaching and prayer. In gaudy dress, gay ribbons, and flashing jewels, she glittered like an Indian princess, fondly deeming herself the admiration and envy of her less showily attired neighbors, and the cynosure even of strangers' eyes. It was only with the denunciations against Popery that she joined heartily. Her hatred of Cecilia Leigh extended to the religion which that lady had lately professed, and so violent was the passion, she might even have been induced to scout Calvinism, had the same Cecilia sought entrance within its barren wilds.

The third day of the protracted meeting, upon her return home, Mrs. Roxanna Carter found an unwelcome stranger in her house.

This stranger was a pale, quiet woman of gentle mien and plain dress, whose hat was laid aside, and

who sat in the midst of the children, the youngest of which was even upon her knee, as if entirely at her ease and at home.

Beholding this scene, Roxanna paused upon the threshold of the sitting-room door. For a minute she stood as if petrified. Her glowing eyes, thunderstruck, fastened as with fascination upon the uplifted, reproachful orbs of the strange intruder, who spoke not. The children, gazing a moment upon the fearful *tableau* in the door-way, drew involuntarily closer to the stranger, while little Annie hid her face in her bosom.

Suddenly the dumb astonishment in Roxanna's eyes gave way to gleams of triumph, and, beholding in the present attitude of things a state favorable to her hidden purpose, she made a mock courtesy and said truly, though with an ironical tone:

‘Welcome, madame, very welcome. I will gather up my valuables and be very glad to leave the field to you.’ And Roxanna, unabashed as unoffended, walked through to her bed-room, purposely brushing with her rustling silken train the modest garments of the still silent lady.

Perhaps an hour sufficed for Roxanna to pack two huge trunks, which she then ordered to be taken to the depot. Meanwhile the sitting-room had become vacant of both stranger and children, so she had an opportunity, unwatched, of appropriating to herself such choice articles from tables and etageres, of both that and the adjoining parlor, as suited her fancy.

These she packed into a portmanteau, and, without one lingering, loving look behind, passed from the house forever. She made but one call on her way to the depot—it was at the boarding place of Mr. Marston. This even was brief—for railroad time is inexorable, and Roxanna was but just in season to secure her passage.

To the lookers-on some wonder was caused as to this sudden departure. But Roxanna was eccentric, and they who marvelled were unaware that the two mountainous trunks, lifted by inclined planes into the baggage car, were Mrs. Carter's property.

On the following morning, Mr. Marston's landlady became impatient that he came not to his breakfast. The bell had been twice rung. Chocolate, eggs, and toast were spoiling—and he was so very particular, too. Well—it was his own fault—still, it was provoking. Mrs. Gleason glanced for the twentieth time at the clock. Goodness! She had waited twenty minutes. Impatience gave place to alarm. He might be dead—dead in his bed—who knew? She knocked at his door. No answer. She waited a moment. Surely, this was the silence of death! A horror began to steal over the senses of the timid woman. She tried the door, when, to her astonishment, it opened naturally and easily. Here she again hesitated, and, partially closing the door, herself remaining outside, called her beloved minister by name. Not a sound, nor a stir. What could it mean? She pushed open the door and

boldly entered, fully anticipating some spectacle of horror.

Indeed, Mrs. Gleason would not have been more astonished to find Mr. Marston in his bed, his throat cut from ear to ear, and pools of blood crimsoning the walls and floor, than to find the smooth-made bed just as she had left it the morning previously, and no sight or sound of Mr. Marston anywhere!

She peered about through her glasses, and found that the dear minister had disappeared in his Sunday dress, and though his old slippers, dressing-gown, worn cravats, *et cetera* were thrown about promiscuously, in an unusual manner, she made no doubt he was in some service of the protracted meeting, perhaps was still on his knees at the love feast, which had been appointed for the night previous, at the Methodist Church—the dear, good man—how indefatigable was he in the work of the Lord!

Reassured, the good woman returned to her breakfast-room, placed the articles of food upon the stove, and, feeling herself unable to eat while her pastor was still at his prayers, took down her Bible, vigorously rubbed her spectacles with the inner side of her apron, and, opening the holy book at random, read aloud, as was her custom :

“‘And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wife’s name was Maachah.

“‘And his first-born son Abdun, their Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nez, and Nadah,

“‘And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth.

“‘And Mikloth begat Shimean. And Nez begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchisua, and Abinadaab, and Esh-baal. And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal, and Merib—’

“O, what dreadful hard names—it makes my jaws ache—it takes a minister to pronounce ‘em right.” And with this interpolation of her own, Mrs. Gleason turned to another page, floundering still through orthographical sloughs :

“‘And of the Levites: Shemaiah, the son of Has-shub, the son of Azzikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merazi :

“‘And Bakbakka, Heresh, and Gagal, and Mattaniah, the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph :

“‘And Obadiah, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthem, and Berechiah, the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Netophatites.

“‘And the porters were Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren; Shallum was their Chief.’

“O, dear me!” And Mrs. Gleason let close the book and took off her glasses, still holding them in her hand, while she looked intently at the minister’s waiting breakfast :

“Surely the Bible is a good book—the best of books, and we ought to ‘make it the man of our counsel, and the guide of our lives,’ as the ministers tell us; I like to read the New Testament very well

—it is a deal easier, but we oughtn’t to be partial, and it is our duty to read the old just as much—but it is fearful hard—I rather hear the minister take his text and preach about it—he can slip right over the words so—but I try and do my best, even if I don’t call all the names as they ought to be. How much easier are such names as Sam, Jim, Joe, and such like—but what a sinner! finding fault with the Bible!” And Mrs. Gleason laid it reverently upon its shelf. She was a good, Christian woman. Who will not say she might have become more benefitted by some book of devotion, on this particular morning, than she had been even by her praiseworthy study of the Sacred Scriptures?

The Rev. Mr. Marston came not home to his breakfast. He appeared not at the nine o’clock morning prayer meeting, neither came he at the regular opening exercises of the day at a later hour.

By noon universal inquiry was afloat—and—what scandal was brought to light. Kingston was stirred to her profoundest depths; she had a sensation for once, which was a sensation, and which threw that caused by Cecilia Leigh’s conduct quite into the shades of indifference.

Roxanna Carter had gone off on the evening train. She had previously called on Mr. Marston. This gentleman, at about twilight, had taken a horse from the livery, professedly to visit a very sick person in the country. Soon after the commencement of suspicion, it was ascertained that the Reverend gentleman

had gone in quite an opposite direction ; indications going to show that he had made speed to reach the junction before the Western train should meet the Northern, for which the latter—upon which was our Kingston lady—should have to wait at least a couple of hours.

A score of people now remembered to have had suspicions that all had not been right between Mr. Marston and Mrs. Carter. How true soever was this, it proved later to be most painfully true, that Mr. Marston had, indeed, met Mrs. Carter at the junction, and fled with her to parts unknown, having first sold the jaded animal he had ridden unmercifully for the merest trifle to a lounger about the cars. The few old clothes and books at his room was all this wolf in sheep's clothing had left to the poor widow in lieu of payment for six months' board. Unsettled bills remained at merchants, tailors, and even at post-office, and at his washerwoman's.

The protracted meeting ceased longer to be protracted. The destruction invoked for horrible Popery had come down summarily upon itself—and so disgracefully ! Better had it been with flood or fire—but God knows best.

With the farther career of the Rev. Mr. Marston and his colleague we have not furthermore to do ; though, doubtless, he will turn up now and then in the columns of some “Sun,” “Herald,” “Star,” or other dispenser of modern light, under the fascinating head of “Another Clerical Delinquent,” “More Clerical Villainy,” and so forth.

We believe not, nor would we persuade others to believe, that all professed ministers of the Gospel—"Evangelicals"—are of the stamp above cited. When, however, the black son of Africa points his finger of scorn at his more northern neighbor, crying, "thou art not white—not white," we have a right and reason to look boldly at the former's swarthiness.





CHAPTER XVII.

WOLVES CLOTHED AS SHEEP.

TIME and circumstances proved that the arrival of the strange lady at the house of the Carters had hastened the departure of Roxanna but by a few days. Her final disgraceful conduct had been for weeks under contemplation, and all arrangements, pecuniary and otherwise, had been secretly effected both by herself and her hypocritical accomplice.

But who was this stranger? All Kingston was on the *qui vive* to know; nor was it long before she had her desperate curiosity gratified. This pale, sad-faced, gentle lady was James Carter's, *alias* Jonathan Gove's, lawful wife, and the mother of his three children!

Was ever before such a series of sensations of such quick recurrence in one little town? Would Kingston ever come to settle down to plain prosy existence in the old-fashioned way, after such strong mental food, such stimulating ambrosia?

But the gentle lady fell sick, very sick at the Carters. There was no lack of visitors. Friendly steps went to and fro, with interest and sympathy as well as inquisitiveness.

And now it transpired that a middle-aged gentleman, who had been for a day or two stopping at the Heald House, had accompanied Mrs. Carter, or Mrs. Gove, as we shall hereafter call her, and was probably a connection or relative.

David Gove, for thus had he registered his name, perceiving the situation of his sister-in-law to be dangerous, the doctor having pronounced her disease to be brain fever, dispatched a messenger for his brother.

To this messenger he said authoritatively: "Say to James Carter that his wife is dangerously ill, and he must return at once—on your life say to him nothing more. Bring him with you."

It would have been impossible to find a messenger who had not already learned that James Carter was a myth, and that the dark, silent man who had borne that name was Jonathan, brother of David Gove at the Heald House.

For five weary years the deserted wife had sought her children. Led by false lights, she had travelled hither and thither, to Buenos Ayres, to San Francisco, to Vancouver, to London, Paris; through countless streets, through wretched ways, searching and longing for her children, more comfortless than Rachel, though faintly hoping amidst despair.

Let us go back and tell the sad story:

Jonathan Gove was the second son and youngest of six children. His parents were very respectable and well-to-do farmers, dwelling in a retired country-

town of New England. His grandfather had been a pious deacon, and his grandmother one of the mothers of Israel. Though his father took not to the church in the same way, he was nevertheless a model of uprightness and morality.

In due time Jonathan's elder brother, David, and his four elder sisters married and settled down, leaving himself to take care of the old people upon the homestead.

It was not strange that he found himself lonely, and that, following the example of his kindred, he also took unto himself a wife.

Louisa Drew had been the name of the maiden chosen by Jonathan. That she was a good woman was proved by the patient care and attention she bestowed upon his aged parents through long periods of sickness. They died, after a few years, praising and blessing her.

Louisa had become the mother of three little girls —Martha, Jeannette and Annie.

Shortly after the decease of the aged people, Louisa, whose strength had been too much tried, failed in health, and became unable to attend to her household. At this juncture, Jonathan insisted she should enjoy a season of rest, and brought into the house Mrs. Roxanna Burgess as superintendent of affairs.

Even at this time Mrs. Gove gently remonstrated. She had an intuitive dislike to this woman. She was gay, careless and extravagant, and Mrs. Gove feared such influence as might be exercised over her

children, the eldest of which had now entered her eighth year.

Moreover, Mrs. Burgess was a woman who did not live with her husband. This, of itself, was enough for Louisa, even had she no other objection. But Jonathan pleaded Mrs. Burgess' youth, and the misfortune of an unhappy marriage.

Subsequent inquiries rendered Mrs. Gove still further dissatisfied with the woman who had become installed in her house.

In a town adjoining that in which dwelt the Goves was a flourishing literary institution. Prof. Norton, whose wife's first children were twins, had taken a child from the poor-house as nurse for these children.

This child, Roxanna by name, was a girl nine years of age, pretty and sprightly, but shrewd and deceitful. She was, however, apparently faithful to her benefactors, for a transfer of home into the Professor's family was to her a delightful change, and she took good care to retain the advantage.

The Nortons were kind and conscientious, and gave their young charge opportunities for education, and even for accomplishments.

When arrived at the age of sixteen, Roxanna was informed that she could no longer attend school; that she must now begin to make returns for trouble and expense incurred, by giving willing service in the care of the house and of the several children.

This was not pleasing to the young lady already

spoiled. Like the famous Caroline Simmons, her only ambition and desire was "to be dressed up, sit in the parlor and thrum the piano."

George Burgess, a country farmer of thrice Roxanna's age, honest, but not over-bright, had often greatly admired the Professor's ward. He regarded her red cheeks and flashing eyes as the most beautiful he had ever seen. On more than one occasion, when he had delivered vegetables at the Professor's house, he had been waited upon by this young girl, who had not failed to notice his undisguised admiration. At first, Roxanna treated this rustic gentleman with disdain. By and by, however, as month after month elapsed, and she found herself, for the most part, confined to kitchen drudgery and waiting upon children, she conceived a new plan, and altered her tactics.

If Mr. Burgess called, she bestowed upon him her most winning smile. If she chanced to meet him upon the street, in store, or in vestibule of church, she exhibited to him most cordial graciousness.

Poor, simple George Burgess was in a maze of delight. He began to live in a beautiful dream, and built a castle in the air, wherein reigned himself and his Roxanna in charming happiness.

Thus it was not strange that, at some kind of a festival, where he found himself promenading with the object of all his thoughts, he was encouraged into a declaration of love, which ended in a proposal for matrimony. Nor was it so very strange either, that,

with the aid of his lady-love, a day and hour was thereupon appointed for the marriage ceremony.

In less than a week thereafter, Mrs. Norton was surprised to find that her protege had taken French leave; shortly after, to learn that she had become domiciled at Burgess farm, as Mrs. George Burgess.

Such ingratitude on the part of one so befriended as had been Roxanna, caused Mr. and Mrs. Norton ever after to think the poor house the proper place for those whom Providence had provided with such a home.

Roxanna in three months had brought about wonders at the farm. She had sold horses, cows, sheep; she had repaired and furnished the house in an elegant manner. Pictures adorned the walls; bare floors had become graced with carpets; an elegant piano occupied in the parlor the very corner which the neighbors remembered old Mrs. Burgess' loom to have stood from time immemorial. Old things having passed away, all things had become new. The young bride rustled into church in her long-coveted silks, and, with haughty disdain, looked over to the pew of the Norton's and the row of flaxen heads which now, at least, she had not to dress.

George Burgess being entirely infatuated, allowed his wife to have her own way. Soon, however, his eyes began to open, particularly when she commenced treating him with the disdain she vouchsafed to others.

Dull as he was, and slow of comprehension, he could not but finally become convinced that his

beautiful child-wife had married him for his very small fortune and to escape the hated thralldom of toil and service.

With anger and reproaches, he perceived that Roxanna's smiles and honied words were no longer for himself, but for others.

He had been foolish, but he was not quite a fool, he murmured to himself; and, indeed, to his wife as well. No more cattle should be sold—no more gewgaws should be brought into the house.

The servant-girl was dismissed, and this once tenant of the poor-house might go into the kitchen or go without eating. Thus said George.

“She was not going to cook and slave herself for George Burgess, the idiot,” she resolutely declared, and after much warfare and many sharp words, Roxanna put together her gay bridal wardrobe and left the house. She sent back for the piano and pictures, but they were, of course, refused.

As George Burgess advertised her the same week, the hotel-keepers refused, after a few days, to harbor her, and, it being difficult for her even to obtain lodgings for more than a day or two at a place, she began to grow desperate.

Finally she returned to the Burgess farm, and, with tears, entreated George again to receive her.

This, after some demur, he did; and she behaved herself tolerably well for a month or two. Then she grew restless, peevish, and altogether unamiable. Recriminations became continual between husband

and wife ; not a moment of peace was in the house. This could not last, especially between such elements.

Jonathan Gove was distantly connected with the Burgess'. He went to the house of George one day on business. Not finding the master of the house at home, he was easily persuaded by Roxanna to await his return, and, meantime, become refreshed from his journey. She busied about preparing him a meal, and, while doing so, poured into his ear such a tale of her woes and wrongs as awakened his deep sympathy for herself, and his anger against such a monster of a husband as she described to be George Burgess.

With tears and sobs, Roxanna concluded her mournful tale. Could not her listener take pity upon her, and recommend her to some good family, for whom she would willingly perform the most menial services. Anything to escape the torture of her present life.

One week afterward Mrs. Burgess found herself happily ensconced as housekeeper in the family of Jonathan Gove. That she was not cordially welcomed by the mistress, she could not fail to perceive. She was too shrewd, however, to allow this observation to appear. Precocious in evil, not yet fully developed, she had already formed her designs. Assuming, therefore, a most injured air of innocence and wrong, and, at the same time, the utmost sweetness and amiability of temper, she imposed both

upon Mr. and Mrs. Gove the one becoming more and more interested in her, the other checking her misgivings, and striving to be satisfied.

Roxanna displayed remarkable fondness for the children, whose affections she seemed entirely to win. That such should be the case proved grateful to Mrs. Gove, who, most of the time an invalid, kept her room, and was sensitive to the least noise.

Several months passed, and Mr. Gove announced his intention of a removal to California. Mrs. Gove was surprised, and expressed reluctance to such a step. When, however, her husband insisted that it was mostly on her account—that she might recover permanent health in that more pacific clime, she ceased to object. She, however, made one demand—that Mrs. Burgess should not accompany the family. She made no sign now, heretofore or after, of suspicions that had been growing, day by day, for many weeks. But when Mr. Gove went on to explain the advantages of Roxanna's assistance in breaking up, removing and re-establishing housekeeping, she regarded him steadily, and said firmly, though gently:

“Mr. Gove, Roxanna Burgess and I have lived in the same house long enough. I consent to go to California, anywhere you choose, with you and the dear children, but not with her, and I beg of you, my husband, to send her away—let her go back to her husband, where is her place.”

Jonathan Gove did not look at his wife when she spoke thus. For a few moments he sat silent.

“Well, shall she go to-day?” he at length questioned.

“Yes, to-day,” returned the wife quietly, though surprised.

“Very well, Louisa, she shall go,” and Mr. Gove prepared to quit the room.

“Of course, Jonathan, I do not mean this very day, if it should be inconvenient for you to take her; I only meant that she should go soon,” timidly and hesitatingly spoke the wife.

She had anticipated argument and remonstrance instead of this instant compliance.

“Just as well now as to-morrow or next week,” spake the husband evenly, closing the door without the slightest approach to a slam.

An hour later Mrs. Burgess, arrayed for travelling, looked into Mrs. Gove’s room, standing within the door, which she held half-open.

“Good-bye, Mrs. Gove. It is my fate to be able to please nobody. I hope when you get to California you will have good health and enjoy yourself. *Au revoir.*”

Mrs. Gove had arisen, and was about to approach the woman, for whom she still felt an emotion of pity, when the latter closed abruptly the door, without heeding the attempted reply.

Disgusted with such insolence, veiled, as usual, with smooth words, Louisa gave a sigh of relief, and thanked God for her departure.

From this day Mrs. Gove’s health very materially improved.

In due time the farm was sold, and all arrangements completed for the long journey. Friends were bade adieu, and wishes received for health and prosperity.

Arrived in New York, at one of the principal hotels, Mr. Gove informed his wife that one of the largest and most valuable of their boxes was missing. He was confident he saw it in Boston—then it must have been laid over. He would go at once for it himself, but—but—and here he whispered to his wife a story of dishonesty with regard to his brother, that this brother must by this time have discovered—he might be in pursuit of him—they might be delayed; she must go back, while he would remain with the children, free from detectives. The wife, shocked and grieved at a confession so humiliating, would fain have urged her husband to make restitution. Finding him obstinate upon this point, she begged of him to make the return journey to Boston, pleading her own still delicate state of health and inexperience in travelling. He was immovable; she must go.

After an ineffectual and weary search at the various depots of the city, the unsuspecting wife returned to New York—to the hotel where she had left husband and children. Alas! she found no child, no husband awaiting her.

The gentlemanly proprietor of the house informed her that, on the very morning of her departure, Mr. Gove and the children had left, accompanied by a

rosy-cheeked, dark-eyed, handsome young woman, who had registered her name, a day or two previously, as Mrs. Brown, from Boston.

Subsequent inquiries of clerk, porter, hack-drivers and at ship-harbor, rendered the fact but too apparent that the missing box was a ruse—that the husband's treachery had been long and deeply planned, even while Roxanna had been an inmate of his house. Indeed, the whole plan of emigration to California had been with this cruel—this infernal intent of deserting his wife for sake of the wicked Roxanna.

Louisa did not sit down and mourn and weep vainly. She was a mother; the same wound that had stricken her almost unto death, stung her to action. Her children were in the hands of her enemy—she could not rest.

Her story, her fearful wrongs became known to all the inmates of the hotel. A purse was made up, detectives were employed, telegrams sent hither and thither, but it seemed almost certain that the guilty parties had sailed either for South America or San Francisco. With apparent carelessness, Mr. Gove had announced to one and another each of these places as his destination. Though this might be a blind, it was still probable that he would wish to put the sea between himself and his victim.

Louisa had been left with only the clothing she wore and a few dollars in her purse. Robbed, outraged and betrayed, she returned to the friends she had left. Great was the indignation of the small

town wherein had dwelt for a hundred years the respectable ancestors of the Goves.

An “indignation meeting” was called, which was well deserving of the name. Incipient Ciceros came to light, who themselves had never dreamed of the eloquencee that was in them.

To what was the world coming, that a grandson of Deacon Gove should have committed this unheard-of, high-handed wickedness? To what sink of iniquity might not Goveville yet fall, since a member of its most respectable family had out-heroded Herod, making himself level with a Bluebeard or a Henry VIII.

King’s Hill echoed the denunciations of wrath and the objurations of horror, that sounded forth from the school house at the Four Corners; echoed them to such an extent that passers-by at the grave-yard, which slept peacefully at its foot, imagined the voice of Deacon Gove issuing horribly from his grave dishonored.

The result was universal sympathy for the woman more bereaved than if four graves had yawned at her feet. Moreover, the sympathy took a practical turn, shedding, as it does not always, tears of gold. Alas, that gleaning sorrowing with one’s sorrow is the most valued, most precious of all.

Nor was it sufficient that each and every inhabitant of Goveville gave of money to the utmost of their means; a vote was taken, universally affirmative, for the town to appropriate several thousands for prosecuting vigorously a search for the absconding husband.

Not that Goveville demanded Jonathan Gove to be returned or delivered up. It desired simply a discovery of his whereabouts, that the children might be restored to a desolate mother.

Accompanied by an officer of justice, Mrs. Gove travelled, we had almost said, the world over. We have seen, at length, after many days—many years—her object accomplished.

And how?

The fugitives had, indeed first sailed for California. They settled in San Francisco, expecting to make that place their permanent home. There they had remained upwards of a year, when one night, on going out of the theatre, Mr. Gove was accosted by a person whom he recognized as, in distant years, a former school-mate.

“Ah, Mr. Gove, if I am not mistaken,” exclaimed the surprised individual, extending his hand.

Mr. Gove’s dark face grew black and blank. Recovering himself instantly, he returned, bowing low:

“Mistaken, sir; I have not the honor;” and he passed hurriedly on.

Fred Hall, for such was the gentleman’s name, was acquainted with the other’s story, and was, moreover, sure of his identity. So he pressed onward boldly, demanding as he came up with the imposter:

“Where shall I find you—I will call upon you in the morning.”

“At the —— Hotel, room No. 99 at your service, sir.”

Mr. Hall gave no credence to these words. He followed Jonathan Gove to a retired street, and saw him enter at the gate of a lovely cottage.

At early dawn, visiting the cottage with an officer of the law, Mr. Hall found his sedate bird had flown, no vestige remaining to tell the tale either of his sojourn or his flight. Mr. Gove had perceived himself watched and followed. He had hurriedly gathered together his effects, and with his family quitted the California shores.

Having a longing to return to his native land, he sailed for New York. Arriving there, he still dared not step foot in New England.

Perhaps in the far West he would be free as elsewhere from eyes he wished never to behold.

His became the third family in Kingston, a city upon the frontier, just laid out and named.

He became himself an Indian trader, not because the business was to him congenial, but because it would keep him removed from prying strangers, and also, alas, keep him from his home, which became to him every day more disagreeable.

Roxanna had accomplished her object; she had won the affections of Jonathan Gove for her own sake, as well as to punish Louisa for her ill-concealed, intuitive dislike of her own self. This grand aim effected, she gradually dropped the mask, which it had irked her to wear. Her unvarying amiability gave place to natural petulance and bursts of anger; her devotion to the children yielded to indifference and neglect.

Jonathan beheld with dismay the transformation. Too late he discovered that the wife he had heartlessly abandoned—whom he had known to be good, true and faithful—had been supplanted, not, as he had dreamed, by one little less than an angel, but by one who “had stolen the livery of Heaven to serve the devil in.” Bitter had been his awakening!





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

HOW had it happened that, at length, Louise, the lawful wife, had penetrated to the retreat of her erring husband? In a way simple enough; and the only marvel was that the discovery had not sooner been made. It had been judged that the delinquents would flee even unto the uttermost parts of the earth; the story of the recognition at the theatre in San Francisco had spread abroad and been credited; it had not, therefore, occurred to those most interested, who meanwhile were journeying across seas and foreign lands, that the fugitives sought were dwelling comparatively at at home.

In the same manner we unwittingly look afar for coveted treasures, while the same are lying ungathered at our feet. While we gaze at unattainable stars, we stumble and hurt ourselves over precious things that would have blest us, grasping them.

About three weeks previously to this last grand sensation at Kingston, a gentleman had put up at the Heald House who was travelling about the country as agent for certain sewing-machine firms. Natur-

ally he listened to bar-room conversations, and, from repeated discourses, learned that a certain Roxanna Carter was a subject of not very respectful mention. At first he had no suspicions; he listened, and, becoming somewhat interested, naturally made some inquiries.

Now, this gentleman was Rufus Ames, who had been a student at the same literary institution, at the same time, as had been the notable Roxanna. He was conversant with the whole details of the painful story.

Descriptions of Roxanna, of the three little girls, of the stern, silent husband, usually absent from his home, startled his memory and aroused his curiosity.

"I will go sell a machine to this Mistress Roxanna," was his first resolution. Fearful, however, of a recognition, he visited on Sunday the Baptist Church, accompanied by a hotel boarder, who was to designate the pew of the Carters.

Yes, it was the veritable Roxanna! Rufus Ames could not be mistaken. The wicked eyes, and the over-red cheeks, the bold presence and haughty bearing, were those of the woman who had wrought such woe, and who, according to rumor, had not mended her ways.

Rufus Ames was seized with trembling as he gazed upon this creature, so long and so fruitlessly sought by a heart-broken mother. Such a horror had he entertained of the heartless manner of Louisa's desertion, that he looked upon this, her supplanter and persecutor, as he would have regarded some

frightful gorgon, the head of Medusa, or the Spirit of Evil, horned and cloven-footed.

He sold no more machines. His sympathy for poor women, bending hollow-chested and weary-eyed over the needle, became immersed in commiseration for the one greater sufferer—Louisa Gove. The clear per cent. for every machine sold became as naught to this philanthropist, who remembered, with a kindling of satisfaction, that a thousand dollars had been offered for the discovery of Jonathan Gove's children.

Let us, however, do this young gentleman justice. Even had there been no perspective prize, Rufus Ames would have hurried off upon the earliest train, to bear the welcome tidings unto Goveville that the *lost had been found*.

But once before had this quiet town been so stirred. Everyone left his own ninety-nine affairs to rejoice over this one that had come to light.

The news was broken gently to Louisa, who was resting for a few weeks at her brother-in-law's house. This brother, David, and Jane, his wife, had proved to Louisa true and faithful friends. So, also, had each and all of the sisters, and their respective husbands; none had but kind words and generous deeds for this poor victim of their unworthy brother's treachery and crime.

Upon this occasion David himself volunteered to go West for the children. He suggested, as did the others, that Louisa should remain at home: to this, however, she could not consent; the suspense would

be insupportable. It was at a singular time, indeed, that David and his sister-in-law arrived at Kingston.

As we have seen, Roxanna, upon her return from meeting, at the threshold of her own door, met, horror-stricken, the well-remembered face of the woman she had so bitterly wronged. But Roxanna could not long remain *hors du combat*. The situation could be turned to her own advantage, and, concentrating a look of rage and hate upon the lady before her, she proceeded to act in the way already narrated.

Had Roxanna wielded a sword, and with it pierced Louisa's brain, the effect could scarcely have been more instantaneous than that of the diabolical thrust from her evil eyes.

Spasms of pain shot from eye to brain. Louisa begged the children to take her elsewhere, and they led the way to the garden, where their uncle wandered, beguiled with sad thoughts. Water, camphor, smelling-salts were resorted to—she was reconducted into the house, and a physician summoned. An attack so sudden, and, at the same time, so severe, seemed inexplicable. Louisa's explanation but aggravated the mystery.

“She has killed me with her evil eye;” this the sufferer often repeated, more than once adding, “O, my children, I have found you, but to go from you forever.”

Delirium followed; and, as we have before stated, a messenger was despatched for Jonathan Gove.

As yet telegraphic wires had not astonished Indians in their homes. Nor yet was it at a slow rate that travelled the summons for the Indian trader's return. But two days elapsed ere he stood by the sick-bed of his wife. It was far into the night, and he had met no one whom to question.

"Is she very sick?" he inquired of one of the waiting-women. Her reply he heeded not. He rubbed his eyes, deeming them victims of delusion. Ah, no; the attenuated face, pale and drawn, the eyes, rolling in delirium, were those of Louisa—his once loved, still loved, regretted, lost Louisa. Had her ghost come back to haunt him? Had Roxanna, with her usual cunning and customary wiles, assumed of witchery another form, and appeared to him in guise of the loved one, to win him back to her own hated allegiance? Was not this a dream; one of the many vivid dreams of the irrevocable past? Should he not awake and find it flown? O, God! was it *not* a dream?

The wretched man glanced around and upward, hopeful of beholding the surroundings of his camp, when lo! the tall form of his brother David, silent and motionless, stern like an avenging spirit, met his stricken gaze. Opposite him, from the farther side of the bed, stood this brother, silent still, though with fixed eyes regarding him intently.

"O, my God!" cried the trembling man, bewildered, clutching together his hands that grew rigid and corpse-like, "am I a dweller upon earth, or have

I been cast into the depths of hell? No, not there; for *there* should I meet neither Louisa, my wife, nor David, my brother; and, still, only from thence could come this agony of remorse, these unquenchable fires of shame and regret. David, my brother, if thou art in the flesh, or if thou art a spirit, speak to me!"

Then David said: "We both live, Jonathan, my brother. O, that we had both died before this had come upon us!"

"Would to God it had been thus—but O, if a life of suffering could atone—but why do I speak of *my* suffering? Eternal tortures were not enough for the misery I brought to the best of wives!"

"Jonathan, we have all suffered. We have had the skeleton in our house, the gall in our cup, the poison in our food, the barbed arrow in our hearts—we have had all we could bear—and till now, brother, till now, I have thought I could never forgive you—I have thought I could die cursing your name—but now, brother, now—"

The brothers in name, and once in affection, like David and Jonathan of old, here met in a cordial and forgiving embrace.

After a day or two it occurred to Jonathan that Roxanna was keeping herself invisible; and, thankful that she had shown for once good sense, he dismissed all thought either to her presence or absence. He thought not to make inquiries, and no one presumed to add to his present affliction by revealing the truth with regard to her. Indeed, he became

entirely absorbed in devotion to his sick wife. Day and night he watched her unceasingly. He, in a manner, forgot himself and his own individual despair. He dared to raise his soul unto the God he had offended, and to plead incessantly that, at least, his injured wife might long enough be restored to reason to grant him her forgiveness. Or, if that were asking too much, that she might intelligently listen to his life-long sorrow and regret. He longed inexpressibly to tell her that not a month had elapsed after his cruelly planned desertion of her, when he would gladly have knelt at her feet, begged her forgiveness and restoration to her confidence. Her wrong and her sorrow had been ever before him, but instead of being able to take her in his arms, and shield her with his love, he had remembered bitterly that his own hand had wrought the separation, wrought all the woe! It was a terrible thought that, after she had found her weary way to his door, she must die without giving him a word, or knowing aught of his continued esteem and affection and his passionate regrets.

Thus revolved ever and ever the wheel of his torments—thus fed upon his vitals the never-satiated vulture.

“I have merited no favor—it is meet that I should suffer—thou art avenged, Louisa!” he exclaimed above her lifeless clay, when, after a few days, the tried spirit took its flight.

When Jonathan insisted upon accompanying the

remains of his wife to her native home, David offered no opposition. Even he had been appalled at the depth and strength of the transgressor's remorse.

"Our family," he said, "our neighbors and friends shall witness his repentance, and forgive him, as I do."

He proposed, indeed, that Jonathan should give up altogether his Western life, and return permanently to reside.

To this, however, Jonathan would not consent. He would go once more amidst his former friends as a penance and punishment. They should behold him, another Cain, with a mark upon his brow. He would stand before them, in all his shame and depravity. He would force himself to encounter their gaze of horror, their exclamations at such a monster. His last crumbling pride should be humbled in the dust—a day and a night would he pour his tears above the graves of his kindred, and then he would go forth from them all forever.

Meanwhile, during this melancholy absence of their father, what should be done with the little girls?

"Cannot you leave them with the family of Mr. Barry, the Presbyterian minister?" asked David.

"O, no! Mr. Barry has five unmanageable sons."

"Well, at the Methodist minister's, then?"

"They, too, have a house full of children, with a mother nervous and hysterical."

David reflected; he felt himself forced to reveal to

his brother, at this unseemly moment, the conduct of Roxanna.

Jonathan listened in silence.

“It is well,” he said simply. “And, upon the whole, I think I will follow your suggestion, and take the children with us. With you they will have the benefit of good schools and good training. I am in a good business, and can support them there as well as here. As to the separation from them—it is not half what I deserve.”

We need not follow the brothers on their lonely journey.

Nor need we enlarge upon the fact that at the funeral of Louisa, men, women and children, in unprecedented crowds, from a momentary glance at the face in the coffin, looked outward long at the almost equally pallid face of him they had come to believe the wickedest man in the world.

Afterward this opinion became somewhat modified. If he had been most wicked, he was now, to all appearance, most unhappy; so in gentle hearts anger gave place to pity, while charity and sorrow became blended with reproaches.

And had then Jonathan Gove been a demon from his birth, as many good people asserted and believed? Nothing of the kind. He had been a clever, kind-hearted boy, more upright and honest than the majority. The deadly enemy knows where is one's vulnerable point, and, with consummate skill, he aims his poisoned arrow at the very heel of one's infirmity.

Had not the spirit of evil, incarnate in Roxanna Burgess, entered Jonathan Gove's house, he might have lived to the evening of his days a happy, honored man. Such a woman has deceived better and nobler men.

No law of God, however, is more inexorable than this: that to all grievous transgressions soon or late succeeds that remorse of conscience which doth "bite like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."





CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY.

THE Baptists of Kingston maintained a steady silence with regard to procuring another preacher. And, since with the two fugitives had fled the officers, treasury, and all of the Ladies' Independent Society, nothing more was said of any similar organization being established. Kingston became very quiet. It would seem that she had bowed her head in compunctive shame.

Mr. Berry attended more faithfully to his own people; while Mr. Pry's special efforts were bestowed upon his peculiar flock.

Father Carolan pursued the even tenor of his way, among his Indians mostly, entirely unaffected by the social storms that had convulsed the little town, whither he bent his steps but semi-monthly. Indeed, to appearance, he remained in blissful ignorance of all that had transpired; notwithstanding, he had silenced at least a dozen mouths that had opened eagerly to rehearse the tale.

In the more recent subjects for gossip, Cecilia Leigh had been left alone. Astonishment at her "perversion" had been engrossed by greater subsequent shocks, which reached her not.

Meantime she had become a frequent visitor at Mr. Lancaster's. This gentleman was failing gradually in health. His daughter, unwilling to quit his side, had abandoned school attendance, and was pursuing her drawing and embroidery at home, with such desultory instruction as Miss Leigh, from time to time, could afford her.

The glory of summer was over, and in this northern region autumn, though lovely, is brief. Forests were assuming the glorious scarlet, crimson and gold, which dreamers, painters and poets so much delight in, and which even prose persons, like you and I, gentle reader, cannot fail to admire.

It was an October afternoon of Saturday, Cecilia's holiday, and she had been spending it with her friend and pupil, Marie Stella. Mr. Lancaster, who had been unusually ill during the week, and had been confined to his bed, upon this day had insisted upon being dressed and wheeled out upon the piazza that he might enjoy once more the sweet view of nature. Cecilia and Stella had both read to him by turns, mostly from books of devotion. The morrow was to be Mass-day, and he wished to prepare for the coming of the priest, who was to bring him, possibly for the last time, that Divine Bread which should be his *viaticum* for the silent journey he felt was near at hand.

Cecilia had been reading from the fourth Book of "Following of Christ." The sun had neared its setting; reflections of its glory lighted up the faces of

both reader and listeners. A rare bloom was diffused over Cecilia's cheek, while her broad low brow gleamed like pearl beneath shining bands of purple-black hair. Her lips wore the tint of the deep-red rose, and her voice had a touch of unusual sweetness and pathos.

Finishing a chapter, she glanced outward, suddenly recollecting that the air might have become cool for the invalid. She met his piercing black eyes regarding her intently. Instantly she forgot her intended warning, thrilled with the conviction of having encountered those eyes in some dreamy, distant past.

"I will have my chair drawn within; and Miss Leigh, if you please, do not go just yet; I wish to speak with you," said Mr. Lancaster, a sudden chill making tremulous his words.

Stella made hastily a fire, and the doors were closed. She urged her father to lie down, but this he refused. He accepted, however, an additional shawl, and after taking a spoonful of wine, declared himself to be comfortable. At length he addressed Cecilia:

"I have said to you, Miss Leigh, and have often remarked to my daughter, that you remind me of an early friend. As you sat to-night in the glow of the sunset, I have been still more impressed with this remarkable resemblance. May I ask, are you really American by birth?"

"This I cannot positively affirm," replied Cecilia. "Having lost my mother at an early age, I became adopted child of the lady whose name I bear."

“ And what was your mother’s name, please ? ”

Cecilia became painfully embarrassed. She remembered, however, that her questioner was upon the very confines of the spirit world, and that his motive must be disinterested. She replied :

“ I am unacquainted even with the name of my mother. Except trifles that appear like a dream almost forgotten, I remember only having been on ship-board, and having suffered shipwreck in sight of land. My mother perished ; I was rescued from the waves, and cared for by strangers, until adopted by Mrs. Leigh.”

“ Have you a mark of the size of a crown piece upon your right shoulder ? ”

“ I have,” was Cecilia’s answer.

“ And to-night, for the first time, I distinguished a small, faint scar upon your forehead which you received in infancy by falling upon a tiny pebble from a table upon which your nurse had carelessly placed you. Your mother’s name was Lucy Forsyth : your true name is Marian Lancaster—my child—my own, long-lost child ! ”

The surprise and consternation of both Cecilia and Stella were checked by the sudden change in the speaker.

His head drooped, and he would have fallen forward but for their timely assistance. At first they thought his spirit had already flown, and Stella commenced uttering shriek upon shriek ; but Cecilia, more composed, made use of restoratives, and soon

had the pleasure of seeing him revive. He had simply fainted from extreme weakness and strong emotion.

He was assisted to his couch and waited on with the utmost assiduity ; but he spake no more, and soon fell into a slumber. Loony, the old Indian domestic of the family, watched him intently as he slept, astonished at the great change she beheld in him. She was one of the good missionary's converts, and she murmured : " He will soon go ; thank God, to-morrow is the Mass-day ; may he live till the priest comes ! " and she fell to repeating her rosary.

Cecilia sat near, stroking softly the shining hair of Stella, who had flung herself upon her knees at the other's feet ; the elder of the two bent slightly her head and whispered : " Be of good cheer, Stella ; God doth not leave you comfortless, but gives you a sister in place of your father."

The dark face, drenched with tears, upraised from Cecilia's knee, and the loosely flowing hair was backward flung, while the voice in which pain and joy, submission and rebellion struggled together, murmured convulsively : " Yes, God is good. But God is God Almighty, and I am human. Let my poor human heart have its cry, and then it may turn unto you, my sister, unto Mary, my mother, and unto our Blessed Lord, who knows how to have compassion upon those who weep."

After another passionate outburst of inarticulate grief, she sobbed out :

“O, if we could only go with our father to the better country! Our good priest is there, and my grandfather. O, what a joyful meeting they will have! And I not there!”

“A little while, and you will follow—only a little while,” said Cecilia, soothingly.

“But a single day to be without my father!”

“And yet, dear, you *must* say, ‘God’s will be done.’”

“Yes, I must, I can, and I will, by and by. I know it is all right, but I feel sure the dear saints in Heaven are sorry for me.”

“And they pray that you may be comforted. Let their holy prayers prevail. Rise above your grief. Throw yourself at the Divine feet, offer up your sorrow to the Sacred Heart, kiss the hand that chastises you, drink of the bitter chalice of thy Lord lovingly.”

“Yes, Miss Leigh, Cecilia dear, I feel that I can do this by and by. Mary, our sweet Mother, will surely obtain for me this grace. Our dear priest used to say that an emotion, desire or prayer that animated her heart, instantly influenced that of her Divine Son, as if the same heart-throb stirred both the one and the other. He grants our petitions, all unworthy as we are, on the account of *her* merits. He sees not the defilement of *our* garments, because of the exceeding whiteness of hers. If we will but place ourselves within it, the glory of her shadow falls upon us, and the dear Christ takes pity. ‘O, most clement, most pious, most sweet Virgin Mary’!”

Thus the night was spent in alternate watching, prayers and lamentations.

Toward morning the invalid, who had been restless and wandering, recovered strength both of body and mind. He expressed a wish for food, and the faithful Loony at once prepared a light dish of broth, which proved grateful and refreshing.

“I have found my first-born—my Lucy’s child—only to lose her forever in this world,” he said feebly, holding, with a convulsive pressure, the hand of Cecilia, which he carried to his lips.

“How was it, father, that you lost her,” inquired Stella, who, kneeling upon the bed’s edge opposite Cecilia, bent over and kissed his brow.

“I have before told you, Marie Stella, darling, that I once had a little daughter, who was drowned at sea. God, in His justice, permitted me to believe this, and to be deprived of her companionship through a life-time, as a punishment for my sin. Give me a drink, and you and Cecilia shall know.”

In few words, often interrupted, the dying man explained:

“At an early age I married Lucy Forsyth. She was good and beautiful. Cecilia much resembles her. Her father, who had been a clergyman, was dead, as was also her mother, at the time of our marriage. She had one elder brother, who married about the same time, and emigrated to America. For we were English people, and upon English soil, as I should have told you. I fell heir to a small fortune,

which proved my ruin. I frequented places of amusement, associated with bad company, and fell to drinking. I must be brief. In moments of madness I came to abuse my wife and child. A heavy blow of my fist, intended for the latter, my wife received upon her head. She had rushed between me and the child. Angered by this, I dealt her still heavier blows, and wreaked my vengeance, also, upon our innocent Marian. I might have killed the child, had not the mother, wounded and maddened, seized a weapon in self-defence, and felled me to the floor. She went immediately for a physician, then went deliberately to work and packed her personal property, possessed herself of what money she could command, and, before I had recovered consciousness, had fled my house.

My first question was for Lucy.

“ You will probably never see Lucy again, and deservedly. Both herself and child were stained with blood from wounds your hands had given. Yea, it flowed from her forehead, and mingled with her tears, when she looked her last upon you. ‘ It is not safe to live with him,’ she said. You cannot blame her; she is not to be blamed.” The physician said this with a stern voice and manner.

As an effect of my dissipation, the blow I had received, and consequent excitement, brain fever ensued, from which I recovered not fully for several months. Anxiety for wife and child, and imprudent searches before my health was sufficiently re-estab-

lished, brought on more than one relapse, so that I must have died had not God willed to prolong my useless life.

“At length came an answer to my letter from my wife’s brother in America. It contained the sad intelligence that Lucy and her child had indeed sought his protection; he had forwarded money for her passage, and had journeyed to New York to meet her, to find that two days previously the ship, on which she had sailed, had wrecked against breakers in a heavy sea, and she, with many another passenger, had received an ocean grave.

“Making inquiry, I learned that the ship he named had indeed met its ill-fated destruction—and still I hoped! Lucy and her child might have been saved, and he might wish to mislead me.

“I came at once to America. I sought the house of James Forsyth. I became convinced his story was but too true. Lucy and Marian, wife and child, were dead, and I was their murderer. Hopeless and aimless, I wandered westward. I would bury myself in the wilderness, and let remorse eat out my wretched heart. But remorse, though it eat like a canker, no more than the fabled vulture consumes the vitals.

“At length time, that doeth wonders, in a measure healed the sickness of my soul. I formed new ties, and, soon after, was brought to the feet of an avenging but forgiving God. Forgive me, Marian, my child.”

“As I hope to be forgiven, my father,” and Cecilia kissed the lips that the chill of death was already embracing.

The dying man still lingered until the sunset of Sunday evening. The prayers of all were granted, and that great grace vouchsafed to him, to receive the Last Sacraments of Holy Church, as a cleansing from the defilements of this world, and a preparation for the solemnities of the world unseen.

The priest remained until all was over. His hand held the crucifix before the glaring eyes of the dying man. Let us hope, as they closed upon the semblance of the Divine Atonement, they opened serenely upon the true “Son of the Living God, Splendor of the Father, brightness of Eternal Light.”





CHAPTER XX.

THE PROPOSAL—THE LETTER.

AT the time of Mr. Lancaster's death, Cecilia gave up her school and went to reside with Stella.

It had been among this man's last requests that Stella should divide her property with this new-found sister, and that both, as soon as convenient, should enter a convent.

The aged Loony still remained as guard of the domicile, although it was understood that upon the departure of the young ladies she was to return to her people.

Mrs. Mansfield felt quite indignant at herself that she could see Miss Leigh leave her house with so little regret. "Are you not ashamed of yourself, Lois Mansfield," she said emphatically, in her usual manner of self-address, "that just because Cecilia Leigh has become a Romanist, you cease to feel the same interest in her? Had not she the same right to take unto herself a new religion that you had? And yet you allow this wall of adamant to spring up between you, as if it were Lucifer she worships instead of the same Lord Jesus Christ. But I cannot love a Romanist. It is out of the question," she added,

calming down after her self-castigation. She continued: "I believe I will go back East. It is now more than a year since I left. Maybe I will never come back. Maybe, if I go, I can induce Herbert to go, after a while, and then we can all set to and bring him back to the Church. Would not that be a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Mrs. Mansfield fed upon this idea, until, a month later, she carried it into effect.

Mrs. Adair shed many tears at her departure. She was consoled, however, by the promise that, if Herbert could not be persuaded to return East permanently, she should come back to Kingston ere many months, and at all events, she should represent the state of this church-forsaken Kingston to Dr. Rand, and have him at once make application to the Bishops to send out a *force* of missionaries unto these benighted regions.

Thus Mrs. Adair became consoled, and Mrs. Mansfield went on her way rejoicing.

Herbert became so lonely in his own house after the departure of his mother that he began to pet with more fondness than ever an idea that had been floating through his mind for the space of several months.

This idea was that of asking Cecilia Leigh to become his wife. He felt no great enthusiasm for her, it was true. She was not really his *beau ideal*. His dream had been of blue eyes, golden hair and sunny smiles. Cecilia was a little too lofty, too self-intrenched, too

pensive. But, then, he had great respect for her. She had exceedingly good sense, a guarded tongue, a peculiar beauty of her own, and she was of his own religious faith. Besides, she was evidently “alone in the world,” and, perhaps, expected he would make her an offer of marriage, and Herbert was so kind-hearted, and so self-denying, he would not disappoint her for the world. Therefore, when his mother had been about ten days departed, full of these good intentions and this spirit of philanthropy, he called on Miss Leigh at the Lancaster cottage.

For Cecilia was known only by this name. The discovery made at the death-bed of Mr. Lancaster had not been published to the world. That it should be noised abroad no reason existed; and both Cecilia and Stella instinctively cherished it as appertaining only to themselves.

It was still Miss Leigh, therefore, to whom Herbert Mansfield paid his addresses.

“It is terribly lonely since my mother left. I believe the cat feels it as well as myself. And taking meals at the hotel is so unhomelike—it makes one feel like a wayfarer. I have thought it would be so nice, Cecilia—Miss Leigh, if you would come back to the house.” This Herbert said in a leisurely way, without very apparent interest.

Miss Leigh opened wide her eyes at the closing portion. He continued:

“I understand you have declined your position in the public school. I beg of you, however, not to

refuse one pupil, who promises to be your most attentive, most obedient. In short, Miss Leigh, I ask you to become my wife, and —”

Cecilia put forth her hands deprecatingly.

“Impossible! You cannot be in earnest. Why were you so precipitate? Why did you not give me a chance to understand, to foresee this, that I might not have the pain—that I might not wound you—but forget the words you have uttered; think of them never again. I am not free to listen to such words; I no longer belong to myself—I wish you greater happiness than I could bring you—I thank you for the honor—although it pains more than it pleases me. Let us speak of other things.”

And thus, from one great subject, they turned to commonplaces, with which was closed the interview.

Strange to say, the youthful, unbearded lawyer went out from Cecilia Leigh’s presence just as well satisfied as if he had been an accepted lover. He snapped his thumb and forefinger carelessly, and a gleam of unusual light shone in his bright blue eyes. It was the reflection from the revived boyish dream of his life; the dream of the blue eyes, dimpled smiles, and golden curls. Surely these dwelt somewhere in the world for him, a flower, half-lily, half-rose; and this was why the dark-haired lady had bade him go his way. Without doubt it was right—and, after all, Cecilia had seemed, and would ever have seemed to him more like an elder sister, whom he would have shielded from the cold world, but only with a brother’s love.

Cecilia had been profoundly astonished by this proffer of marriage from the son of her friend. Although she could have been no more than two or three years his senior, she felt a consciousness of much greater difference of age. From childhood her associations had been mostly with people older than herself. Mark Varnam had a seniority of ten years. Also her nature had been naturally grave and thoughtful. A woman of twenty-seven, like Cecilia, to marry a young man of twenty-four, who was very boyish of his years! Cecilia thought it over, and the absurdity struck her as extreme.

“‘No, a man may not marry his grandmother,’ is a very proper saying. Sooner I would marry a man of fifty. Age should be on his side; a woman grows old twice as fast. The wife proper for Herbert is now romping about in short clothes. He will find her one of these years, and then he will thank heaven and me. For me, I have loved once. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was wrong. She says: ‘Those never loved, who say they loved once.’ *I loved once*—but not now. It was an unholy altar whereon that love was laid; let even the ashes thereof be scattered; let even the memory thereof be forgotten!”

Cecilia dreamed not, uttering these words, that soon the ashes were to be pitilessly raked open, and stir the memory which she would fling aside forever.

These reflections having succeeded the departure of

Herbert, Cecilia experienced a chill, when becoming sensible of imprudence in remaining longer in a cold room, she drew a light shawl closely about her and returned to the sitting-room. Loony alone was there. Stella had gone down town on some errands and had not yet returned. At almost dusk, however, she came in, shaking with cold and hurried travelling.

“Something for you, Cecilia,” she said presently, searching among her parcels, a moment after dropping a letter in the other’s palm.

A letter for Cecilia! Letters had been rare during these long fourteen months? What did it mean? She trembled, but remained silent, while Loony lit the lamp. Then she glanced at the superscription—it was the well-known hand of Mark Varnam!

Cecilia wondered afterward that no impulse prompted her to throw this letter to the flames. She thought she should surely have obeyed it; but this is questionable. Cecilia had been engaged in reading “Lives of the Saints,” and had began to seek opportunities for imitating them, even so faintly, by practicing self-denials and mortifications; and now here, in case of this letter, what a golden chance had slipped.

The truth is, that at sight of this letter, which Mark Varnam’s hand had touched, her heart grew faint, and her sight dim. She had no thought of Saints, nor their pious practices. She bowed down her head over this strange intruder, which she clasped convulsively in her two hands.

Not one-half hour ago she had declared boastfully —she had loved *once*; that even the memory of that love should haunt her no more forever?

And now, even now had she been surprised by the sudden rising of the tide, and the waves of memory rolled over her as a sea, till they threatened to sweep her from her feet, and launch her forth amongst the surging breakers.

“O, God, have mercy upon my weakness,” she supplicated at length, when floods of tears had succeeded the shock and the faintness, “forgive the one look backward to my lost Eden, over which hung always the flaming sword!”

Loony suddenly remembered she had left sundry things undone in the kitchen, and, scolding herself for her thoughtlessness, withdrew and rekindled her fire in the outer room. Stella lingered for a few minutes. Her heart was bursting with sympathy for this great emotion, but what words could she offer? At length, kneeling at Cecilia’s side, and kissing a fold of her dress, she repeated solemnly: “‘What return shall I make to the Lord for all that He has rendered to me? I will offer a sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord!’”

From Cecilia came no response, nor did Stella expect one. Silently she passed out to join Loony, leaving her sister “alone with her dead.”

After a little, Cecilia raised her head. It was a pitiful, almost distorted face that she turned heaven-

ward, and her lip quivered so, she but half lisped the ejaculation which had just fallen from Stella's lips: "I will offer a sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord."

Then she found strength to break the seal and read Mark Varnam's letter.

MY OWN DEAR CECILIA :

I have found you, although you fled me so far. I recognized your style in the L—— articles in the T——, and have bribed the editor, M——, whom you know to be my friend, to give me your address. Yes, I have found you—and O, the happiness in those words. I would fly to you in place of sending these inadequate words, were I not altogether disabled by a gun-shot wound which confines me to my room. Only this moment have I learned that L—— is my own dear little Cecilia, of that far-heathenish West. How came you to bury yourse f there? Thank God, I have found you. I am so happy—so grateful—so rejoiced—that I could almost be a Christian. If ever in my life I have felt like falling on my knees and thanking God—if there be one—it is now, and *only* now. If ever I have made any approach to a belief in a Supreme Being and over-ruling Providence, it is now that I have found you. Cecilia, I actually *prayed for you!* Throughout these many months, I have said day and night: "I will believe in God when I find Cecilia." A Christian might call this blasphemy; but I believe a God of Truth and Mercy might accept the vow, be it holy or unhallowed. The veteran alchymist, rejoicing over the ever-sought "philosopher's stone," could not cry out his Eureka so exultantly as do I mine. Pshaw! What are all the "philosopher's stones," "fountains of youth," "elixirs of life," compared to my Cecilia—my "pearl of great price"? My pearl, which I threw so recklessly away! Alas, that I must say that! But I have bitterly suffered. O, Cecilia, when I came home and found you gone, I was inconsolable. Instantly was I freed of my infatuation for the syren who had temporarily charmed

me. I wrote her a note expressing a wish for dissolution of our late compact. This she answered in person; she would fain have held me to my engagement, and for this purpose used every art and fascination, but her power was gone. In our own little room, Cecilia, the charm of your presence still lingered, and there I told Laura that my lawful wife was still empress of my heart. She turned upon me with withering scorn, and with words of contempt, swept haughtily from the room. Believe me, Cecilia, I saw her depart with utmost satisfaction, and thankful that I had not made of myself a permanent fool, went diligently in search of you. I know not how it happened, but I was put upon a wrong track; fondly believing I was following you, I crossed the ocean, and coming up in London with the myth that had mislead me, I found to my utter disappointment, *it was not Cecilia*. Then I suffered fearfully. Without hope, which had hitherto sustained me, I wandered about, not knowing whither. At length I returned to America. One day, in our favorite magazine, I found an article prefaced by a quotation which I had often heard fall from your lips. This attracting me, I perused the whole, when, rising from my chair and flinging down the book, I exclaimed: "Cecilia wrote that!" I hurried to the publisher; I would not be put off; I learned the truth, made hasty preparations, and, on my way to the train, calling on a friend that the time might seem less tedious, I received this wound, which has completely disabled me. Amidst all, my dear, how ardently I have thanked God that you are indeed my lawful wife!—that you are mine, and I am yours, before God and man. I have had time to reflect. The Catholic Church, of which you was a member, was right. She knows the human heart better than man knows it. I hated her marriage service, and would have none of it. She forced it upon me, and now I thank her and do her reverence. Yes, Cecilia, Christian marriage is the centripetal force which keeps men and women, human cometæ, from flying off in tangents. Fool have I been, through my insane folly, to lose so much of your society. My stupidity will remain to myself forever incomprehensible. Those **who**, like yourself, know how to love, know, also, how to forgive. I am in our own house—in our own room. Everything speaks of you, misses you, and like myself, longs for you with inexpressible longing.

Fly, my Western bird, over the wilderness that divides us.
That you may spread wing this moment, I cease to write more.
Happy must that Christian be who has faith in the prayers he
breathes for his beloved! Cecilia, my wife, a thousand adieux.

M. V.

While Cecilia had held this letter unread, she had supposed the one backward glance to her vanished happiness to have been her last. Now, the floodgates had been opened!

He had then been true to her all through these weary months, and she had known it not. He had regretted that cruel letter which had driven her from his house. O, that cruel letter that had wounded her unto death. Remembering that, could she conceive of a possibility through which she could return to him?

Never had she dreamed of so early a repentance. He had not sinned, then, so grievously. He had been tempted, but had resisted at the last moment. Her absence had saved him. He was now alone, sick and suffering. He was waiting for her at home. She could see him in fancy; his attitude, his smile, his old familiar ways. She could go back to him—crushing down her wounded pride; old acquaintances should know them no more; a sweet morsel they need not furnish for unruly tongues. As if they two were the only dwellers upon earth, they might live a second Adam and Eve. Years hence, when the green mounds of earth should cover them, who would know or care that she, slighted and trodden upon once, had

gone back to kiss the hand that had spurned her? Both were in the prime of existence; a long life might be before them.

A warmth, a glow filled Cecilia's heart. The picture was sweet and beautiful; upon it she rested her weary mind as she would have laved her burning brow upon an offered bath of dewy rose-petals. This same evening Cecilia had deemed the poetess in error,

“Those never love, who say they have loved once.”

Having given her mind unto religious subjects, and her heart unto God, Cecilia had fancied herself no longer bound by earthly love; for her it was dead and buried. This letter had stirred the slumbering ashes, and kindled anew the flame, until, by its intense force and brilliancy, she became suddenly aroused to a sense of the real situation. She came out from this dream with a start and a bound. As from a blazing house that already threatened to tumble, the inmates, startled from sleep, blinded by smoke, palsied with fear, yet nerved with desperation, seek madly an escape, now missing the way, now stumbling, now rising, so came Cecilia from her brief dream to behold it wreathed with tongues of fire, and in convolutions manifold of flame. Clasping her hands, she exclaimed: “Away, thou cheating vision, delusive dream of what may never be! Not for me love, home, domestic peace—not for me Mark Varnam's voice and smile. They led me away from

duty; they won me from the safe fold, and charmed me unto a wilderness at length, where God was not. Have I not eaten the forbidden fruit—have I not been cast out of Eden—doth not the flaming sword guard the entrance? For my sin have I not promised atonement? O, my God, whom I have lately found, my Saviour, Prince and Deliverer, henceforth let my brow wear thorns instead of roses—let my hands and my feet feel the briars in the way. Let me carry my cross unto the Calvary of my expiation. O, my Divine Model, let me not faint nor turn back. Show unto me Thine hands wounded—Thy sacred feet torn with nails. Turn toward me Thy bleeding brow and suffering smile, that I may look on Thee, whom I, too, have pierced. Give to me, unworthy, the coveted name ‘Sister of Mercy.’ Let me brave heat, cold, storm, pestilence and death. Let my lips kiss the unsightly dying, and may my soul shrink never from appalling scenes of infection and distress. This be my road unto Eternal Life. This, through our blessed Lord, my passport unto heavenly immortality.”

It will be seen that Cecilia was disposed to magnify her former delinquencies, and to take a view of the present state of things altogether different from what the Church would recommend. As yet, however, she was listening to her own sense of duty and her almost morbid desire to do penance, and not to the voice of the tender Mother, who is faithful and wise in all her counsels.

Understanding well the nature of Cecilia, certain of her constancy and firmness even in trivial affairs, Mark Varnam had not dreamed of a rival in his affections. Least of all, of such a rival. It were easier to dislodge were it of flesh and blood. As well from its high place might he attempt to pluck the evening star, or, from out the depths, bring the diamond in mid-ocean dropped, as to win Cecilia from her high resolve.

There are some souls most strong and daring, which lay upon the altar such costly offerings, making immolations with such self-forgetful recklessness, which besiege Heaven with such pertinent though loving audacity, it would seem as if the Divine Heart had made covenant that they should come off conquerors over “the world, the flesh and the devil.”

Cecilia was one of these. Her eye had resolutely turned from the glowing picture that had almost palpitated with promised joys. Tempted by that which woman holds most dear, her wounded heart had rebounded with revolt from the lovely decoy, hiding itself in wounds divine, renewing there its promise of perpetual fealty.





CHAPTER XXI.

FACE TO FACE.

SUCCEEDING this ordeal, Cecilia became conscious of new strength. She marvelled, when permitting herself to recur to it, at the temporary weakness which had overpowered her. From day to day she busied herself with labors, striving to bring nearer the day of her departure.

She had destroyed Mark Varnam's letter without even having glanced at the date. She was unaware, therefore, that some trivial circumstance had caused delay of fifteen days to the letter, and that, at the moment of her reading it, its unhappy writer was awaiting her expected arrival with impatience, eager and untold.

She had deemed it wisest, for obvious reasons, to make no reply. Words from her—and they could be but of one import—would but provoke argument, and excite energetic protests. Mark would soon lose all trace of her. She had discontinued her contributions to New York journals; she would soon leave Kingston for a southwestern city; the wide world would be between him and her. And yet, upon what can we reckon as certainties beneath the sun?

Mark Varnam and Cecilia Leigh were to stand once more face to face.

It was again drawing near to Christmas. Cecilia and Stella, having completed preparations both of personal and business natures, were about to leave. Almost the last articles were laid in the trunks. It was Saturday night; on the following Monday they were to take the train for Duluth, thence to St. Paul; a route not the most direct, but which would avoid the stage drive from Brainerd to Sauk Rapids, which Cecilia, with Mrs. Mansfield, had before found tedious.

These plans, however, had been laid without consultation with Father Carolan. He had been away to the Indian country, and had made no visit to Kingston since that at which he had performed the last sacred rites for Mr. Lancaster.

But on the morrow he was to come, and both Cecilia and Stella were preparing for Confession and Holy Communion. Had no other obstacle presented itself, the priest alone would have made it clear to the sisters that they had altogether miscalculated, and that these arrangements could not be carried out.

The young ladies had taken tea, and weary, sat before the glowing fire, pensive and silent. A quick, decided knock at the outer door startled them.

So unusual was this, at this hour, too, that, silently regarding each other, neither of them made a movement for answering the summons. It was repeated.

This time Cecilia took the lamp, and hastened to the door, to meet—Mark Varnam.

She was surprised into no shriek—not a word even. All her energies were requisite to repel, with gentle firmness, Mark Varnam's almost fierce embrace.

She led the way into the sitting-room, which Stella had just vacated for the kitchen, where the Indian woman was rinsing the tea things.

We will omit mention of the gentleman's raptures which soon perceptibly cooled and abridged, the more Cecilia's repellent manner became apparent.

“ You did not come—you did not even write me, Cecilia—why? Did you not receive my letters—two of them ? ”

“ I received one only. I thought it best not to write you. I wished you to forget me.”

“ Forget you, Cecilia? Does the right hand forget its cunning? Was it because you had forgotten me ? ”

“ I wished to forget.”

“ And wherefore ? ”

“ Mark Varnam, there is no Cecilia Leigh for you in this world.”

“ What! how! have you given your hand to another ? ”

“ O, no, no. I loved you once—you only. As no woman should love, I loved you, Mark Varnam. But that is over now. It was a sin, and has been bitterly punished.”

“ But, Cecilia, let us bury the past. I will atone

for all the wrong I wrought you. I was insane; now I am clothed in my right mind. Cecilia, I will swear before any altar—I will stand again with you, to-night, before priest, minister or magistrate; I will sign, without protest, the indissoluble bonds that death only can sunder. Surely you will not doubt me?"

"I will be frank with you, Mark. I cannot help calling you Mark as of old," and here her voice trembled. "I doubt not your present good intentions; I could place my hand in yours with all the confidence that I first did, resting fully assured that the vows you assume would be inviolate. It is not because I doubt, or have not faith in you. It is because, reft of my earthly love, I was given a clearer vision, and learned how, in this unstable world, we need the support of a hand that fails not in life or in death. With love and faith shipwrecked, I have learned to have faith in that higher, holier love, which time nor circumstance may affect, which is typified in that boundless pity and tender compassion which led the God-man to lay down His life for us. 'Greater love hath no man than this.' I have transferred my heart from its human entanglements to Him, to whom its allegiance is first due. My vows are made; I belong to God, and no longer to myself."

"What mean you, Cecilia? You do not say to me that henceforth our lives are to be divided—that our ways shall not be as one?"

"That is my precise meaning."

"Good heavens, Cecilia!" exclaimed Mark,

violently striking his cane upon the floor, “and you say it as calmly and unconcernedly as if life and happiness were not at stake. Cecilia, you are mad—you will drive me mad! Who has influenced you to this terrible decision?”

“You will believe me, no one. It is a matter which lies only between my soul and its God.”

“And have you no mercy, no pity upon me?” cried Mark, desperately.

Ah, he forgot how merciless, how pitiless *he* had been. There are some men who cannot remember such things. But Cecilia was too generous to remind him.

“I have pity for you, Mark, yes—but time nor death are more inexorable than my decision.”

Mark Varnam, despite his wound, which was unhealed and yet painful, threw himself upon his knees before Cecilia. He seized her hands, which she would have withdrawn, but they were as in a vise.

“I implore you, Cecilia, rid yourself of this blind infatuation. Doom not yourself and me to a life-long unhappiness. In the name of that Supreme God who has won your faith, I entreat you. By the pity and compassion of the Divine Heart you have learned to reverence, I conjure you. No, I will not release your hands until you take back your cruel words, words which, as my wife, you have no right to utter.”

“Release me—Mark Varnam—this is unmanly in you. You mistake, if you think to win me thus

Would you incur my contempt? Release me instantly—I command you."

Mark Varnam arose quickly to his feet. As he did so, a groan escaped him, and he turned deathly white.

Turning to recover his hat and cane he said, faintly:

"Very well; so this is the end, is it? I have risked my life for you, I would risk my soul for you, Cecilia. I must go now. Farewell." He extended his hand; she gave hers for this parting familiarity. He pressed it gently, and went out into the night again.

Cecilia stood bewildered. How suddenly his whole manner, voice and face had changed! From enthusiasm to calmness, from hope to despair, from domination to submission! How changed the man who had gone out, from him who had come in. A ghastly pallor had succeeded the bright flush of expectation and joy, and Cecilia would scarcely have recognized the countenance that had flitted out into the darkness.

For a full minute she stood spell-bound by the closed door. An indefinable fear thrilled her. Was Mark Varnam about to die—was it death she had seen in his face?

She opened the door and looked forth. Though the air was cold and she shivered, she went out a few steps upon the crisp snow. There was no moon, and the stars were clouded.

"He will never find his way back to the hotel," she murmured in a distressed tone. A faint groan caught her ear; another and another, till, advancing farther, she heard her own name called feebly. Outside the gate she uttered a little scream, finding Mark Varnam leaning against a tree.

"Go back Cecilia, you will take cold. By and by I may get strength to go on."

This was spoken with such evident difficulty that Cecilia was no longer to be deceived. She said:

"You are ill—perhaps you are not recovered from your wound—come back into the house."

Mark Varnam, making a vain effort to move, relapsed into his position.

"I am powerless—my wound is re-opened and bleeding profusely. Leave me to die alone, Cecilia. It is a doom you have yourself pronounced."

Cecilia hurried back for help, and, with the aid of the old Indian and Stella, succeeded in assisting Mark Varnam once more into the house. He was in evident agony, as groan after groan attested. Loony was at once despatched for medical aid, and soon Doctor Stone arrived. Examining his patient, he at once sent off for an assistant and medicines, and he and Doctor Lawtelle, during the entire night, remained with the invalid. They succeeded in quieting the flow of blood, and placed him under the influence of such powerful anodynes that, toward morning, from excessive pain he found relief in slumber.

Mark Varnam had undertaken this hazardous jour-

ney against the admonitions of his surgeon ; but he would not be controlled. From New York to Kings-ton he had exercised, indeed, due carefulnes ; but in presence of Cecilia all danger was forgotten. In the sudden spring from his knees, at Cecilia's threatened disdain, the mischief had been wrought. As he had assured her, he had truly risked his life for this interview ; his soul had been long risked for persons and motives far less worthy.

It was Sunday morning, and Cecilia prepared for Mass. She stood gazing at the pallid face of the invalid sleeper for a moment, before going out. To her surprise he opened his eyes. Beholding her arrayed in out-door garb, he inquired faintly—"where?" "To church, for a couple of hours," she replied. Dr. Stone has promised to remain with you." He looked at her reproachfully, as much as to say—"how can you leave me ?"

She added : " I have a question to ask you. You have been in great danger, which may not altogether be passed. Father Carolan is here to-day; he will not come again for two weeks, at least. May I not ask him to come and see you ? "

Mark's eyes spoke volumes, before he said :

" Yes, for heaven's sake, bring hither the priest, and make haste to get me converted, if that is what you are after. Anything to bring you to me."

Cecilia smiled, beholding again that old michievious smile that she used to admire as irresistible. He added :

“Let us reason a little together, Cecilia. Surely, you have a few moments to spare. Sit down, and let us touch upon your favorite theme. You are thoroughly converted, I perceive. Permeated through and through with the true Catholic spirit. As I have said, and many another has said, it will do very well for women and children. It is quite becoming to you, Cecilia, and yet I wish it did not possess you. In the old country I learned somewhat the history and nature of this ancient religion. I formed acquaintance with members of our brotherhood—the Freemasons. They were Apostate Catholics, some of them. Of all sincere haters of that creed they are most bitter. Since they have had experience, should not their testimony be accepted in preference to that of those whose knowledge is confined to theories, or who, at most, have but a limited acquaintance with that vast terrorist, the Roman system ?”

“On the contrary, for the very reason that they are Apostates should their testimony be discarded. Shall we believe the Prince of fallen angels when he tells us that God Almighty is unjust and ungenerous in commanding us to do penance and be baptized, or be forever lost ? Listening to his suggestions, shall we become convinced that the Kingdom of Darkness is more desirable than the realms of light ?”

“But, Cecilia, you are sensible. You *must* see that the Romish Church claims monstrous powers. If these powers be admitted by the world, then the world must allow herself to be blindfolded and gagged,

lying helpless at her conquering feet. She must utter no protestation when this mighty engine crushes the intellect, controls thought, and curbs the will; nor utter one cry when the cruel Juggernaut, like iron fate, represses the dearest interest, and the holiest affection.

“I understand now your action of last evening, Cecilia, The Indian mother who tosses her child beneath the ponderous wheels is your fit prototype. She sacrifices her infant, and you the love of your life, each in blind obedience to a usurped authority, hugging to your heart the bitter pain, comforting yourself with the belief that an offended deity is pacified, and you are brought one step nearer to a blessed elysium.”

Cecilia demurred to this.

“There is no shadow of a parallel,” she insisted. “My decision was formed with no exterior prompting. My will was free, and I stood alone.”

“And yet, I insist, the spirit had been imbibed, the glamour cast before the eyes, the false altar set up within your heart. What though you were not visibly gyved or manacled? The moment you stepped inside the Romish Church, you drank of her lulling waters, and ate of her poisoned food. You became fascinated, and it is no longer possible for you to see clearly, or act intelligibly. She has converted you into a machine, and you move as she pulls the wires.”

“At least, then, I should be conscious of this,” observed Cecilia.

“No; this is not in the programme. Herein lies Rome’s consummate art—her witchery, it might be termed. Her votaries she blinds, telling them softly they shall the better see. She strangles all reluctance by obliging them to swallow so enormous a pill of faith that they become purged henceforth of questionings and misgivings. Having accomplished this dosing and training, she puts them in harness, and holds the rein with such accustomed tact and strictness that, not veering, nor changing unto right or left, they fancy themselves free. Halt—one kicks the traces—then what? Words and blows. Then one wakes up to find where one’s freedom is! *A la* my brothers, the Freemasons.”

“And when *your* horse halts and kicks the traces, what do *you* do? What does the parent when his child rebels? What does the civil authority to the breaker of the law? Only to restive, unruly spirits is the wholesome law irksome. To rebellion only is the coercive hand applied.”

“Were ever such an impossibility miraculously to take place as that I should become a Catholic, only God in Heaven should know it,” asserted Mark, resolutely. “I would never fetter reason and intellect by subscribing to any set of dogmas, nor restrain my free action and will by submission to Papal priesthood. Never. None but cowardly, weak-minded men ever make themselves thus subservient to any set of men.”

“This is useless, and worse than vain,” said Cecilia, rising.

“Must you go, then,” pleaded Mark. “Well, bring along the priest when you come, and I will do my best to get into a state of extreme docility. I will, really. Like a little child, I will be able to take the cardinal virtues, the eight beatitudes, and the seven deadly sins, all at one dose. There, I am tired out, and I suppose you must go.”

When Cecilia returned, she greatly surprised Mark by a new warmth of manner, and an eager, almost passionate embrace.

“So, when Charon is already here with his boat to take me over, Cecilia, my icicle, thaws out again, and renders it harder for me to go.”

Dr. Stone arose to leave.

“My patient has become refreshed by a good sleep. I think he will get on very comfortably. Good morning.”

“That is as much as some doctors know,” remarked the invalid after the door had closed behind the medical oracle. “I have been awake every blessed moment, while, most urgently, he snored in his chair. I was glad he slept. I had leisure to revolve a project of my own, and to invoke the last Goddess whom I may worship. I thought of all our past, Cecilia, my dear, (she had knelt by the bedside, and, clasping his hand in both her own, bowed her face over them), our drives, our walks, our readings of the poets—the pleasant days of those pleasant years—they came up, as comes the past to one drowning. They *were* beautiful, Cecilia. But everything comes

to an end ; and the saddest of all is that we hasten this ending by our follies and crimes. You are right, my friend ; we need a guide at our every step. Could we all, in early life, for a few hours or days lay at death's door, as I do now—”

“ What mean you, Mark,” wildly interrupted Cecilia. “ Did not the doctor say—”

“ Never mind the doctor now, and don’t interrupt me ; as I was saying, if we stood for awhile at death’s door, in face of the solemn realities on either side, we might grow wiser and better. Pity it is that at death’s door only we should learn how to live.

“ But, Mark, you will not die ; you must not. I have learned—O, Mark, I am yours in life and in death.”

“ Good heavens ! my own Cecilia again !”

“ Yes, your own Cecilia. I did not understand, and I thought I must deny myself your love and your presence—that thus only could I atone for what was wrong in our past, both for you and for me, but to-day Father Carolan says the Church is very plain in its teaching upon this point. I cannot take the vows of a religieuse while I am your wife, and, as your wife, my only proper place is with you—O, Mark, my darling.”

“ Glorious ! Now here goes that laudanum bottle, and here that three-times-three morphine powder,” and, by a sweep of his hand, away flew the glass and its contents, followed by the potions that, but an hour ago, had been destined to bring Mark Varnam at the feet of the Goddess of his invocation—Lethe.

Now, away with Lethe—away with thought of any and every Goddess save the one at his side—the enthroned queen of his heart.

When, a half-hour later, the priest made his appearance upon the scene, he was received by Mark with liveliest demonstrations of joy and gratitude. The latter's flow of words was in this wise :

“ Utterly wasted and vain were all my pleadings. As well might I have entreated a marble statue. You can strike fire from flint, but harder than flint was my wife. Ice may be made to melt, and iron to flow like water, but this stern, proud Cecilia of mine was proof against any calorific—but yours, sir ; ” and here Mark continued more rapidly, as he perceived the priest inclined to interpose: “ Yes, Cecilia had not only become armed and equipped, but, girded and encased in that adamantine sense of duty which no earthquake can overthrow, no fires crumble and no waters drown.”

“ And which a word of authority can cause to disappear,” interrupted the priest.

“ I do not understand it,” audibly reflected Mark Varnam, after moments of silence.

“ If Cecilia had known more of the laws of the Church, or if she could have had an opportunity for consultation with me or with any priest, or, in fact, with any well-informed Catholic, she would have known that while she was under vows of matrimony, which only death can dissolve, she could not possibly assume other vows, which becoming a Sister of

Mercy presupposes. Cecilia had *strayed from the fold*, poor child," continued the priest, "more in heart and in fact, than in outward act, it is true, and perhaps, she was more than necessarily severe upon herself. Having conscientiously come to believe that separation from yourself was a duty she owed to God, and that upon it rested the salvation of her soul, she would have remained firm against all persuasions to the contrary, however consonant they may have been with the inclinations of her own heart. But the moment she finds that this attitude she has assumed is not upon Catholic ground—that she is not required to make that particular sacrifice, but is in duty bound to fulfill her obligations as a Christian wife—do you not see?"

"And the cords that bound her become weaker than spiders' webs. Yes, I see, as I never before saw," exclaimed Mark, staring at the priest, as if he expected to discern outlines of pinions, that might be pluming themselves for flight.

He continued :

"My dear sir: you are truly successor to the Apostles—you open the eyes of the blind, as in my case; you set the prisoner free, as in case of Cecilia. Do I understand? It was not your voice nor your authority that permitted or commanded Cecilia to return to me as my wife, but the voice of the Church through you, the expounder of her laws."

"You speak correctly," was the priest's reply.

"Truly, do I see with new eyes, and understand with

a clearer sense. While I have entertained contempt for the Church, even from my youth up, she has been my friend. Filled with superior knowledge, as I thought, enlightened by modern rationalism, I scouted even her ordinance of marriage. In a manner she forced it upon me, without my acknowledgment, and with my protest. Openly despising her counsel, in an hour of temptation I followed the devices of my own heart. Although I repented ere I had erred most grievously, yet the consequences were as bitter. During my eager search for my lost wife, I had this source of joy to sustain me—she was my wife. I forgot, then, to thank the Church for this. But, like a friend and Mother, she has followed me still, and when, an hour ago, I had fully resolved to take my own life through despair of Cecilia's obstinacy, this Church, true to her unchanging laws, without performing a miracle, by a simple utterance gives me back my wife, and restores me to life. This Church, more than myself faithful to my wife, sought and found her; and when she might have made use of her, and warn her as in the crown of her rejoicing—wonder of wonders! she would not."

Mark ceased to speak, although, it would seem, he still continued this train of thought; for, after the priest had spoken considerably, at length he resumed:

"From a merely human point of view, as a guide for man in his pilgrimage here below, without reference to the Beyond, the Catholic Church would appear admirable. In his youth, man thinks it beau-

tiful and glorious to be untrammelled and free. To have thrown off restraint, to be no longer a child, is his prerogative of manhood. Elated, self-reliant, he scorns the idea of a guide. After repeated missteps, failures and falls, he looks about for help. While the world, cold and scoffing, passes by on the other side, who is it that lifts him by the hand, forgives the past, speaks hopeful for the future, pointing the way to honor and to peace ?

“ Why, sir,” with sudden animation, “ only this morning I spoke bitterly to Cecilia of this Catholic Church—this Church that was already, by her grace, making me whole. I said, if ever, by some inexplicable mystery or miracle, I should become a Catholic, that only God should know it. Now, sir, God willing, I shall become a Catholic, nor shall I care unto whom it be known. For, truly as there is a God in Heaven, not Paul himself was converted with more suddenness than myself, and I bow my heart and soul in profound admiration of this mighty Mother, the Church, and in adoration of its Builder and Author, God.”

After the priest had gone, and Mark was again alone with Cecilia, he said :

“ How much suffering might have been saved both to you and to me.”

“ We will regret nothing, Mark ; all has been ordered aright, even the pain, which we will accept as having been deserved before we were fitted to enjoy this free and happy pardon. Let the memory

of its bitterness chasten our joy, and from now henceforth, with thanksgiving and reverence we will be loyal to truth and religion."

To which Mark replied :

" And shall we

" Trust no future, however pleasant,
Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act, act in the living Present
Heart within, and God o'erhead."

¶





CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. MANSFIELD RETURNS TO KINGSTON.

WE are not quite done with Kingston. It thrives and grows. Germans, Swedes and Polanders, as well as the universal Yankee and Irishman are filling up the county around about.

The Catholic Church is so largely increasing that arrangements are already on foot for building a mere commodious edifice. The ground has been selected, and, strange to say, its great enemy's, Mrs. Morrow's cottage, unless she moves it away, will be nestled within its shadow. It is to be hoped she will manufacture no more tales of what she has seen and heard for the special amusement of tea-drinking ladies and Baptist divines.

The probability is, indeed, that Mrs. Morrow's attention will be otherwhere diverted. Not Mrs. Morrow's only, but that of the goodly sisters of her sect. For Mrs. Mansfield, with the spring, the flowers and the birds, like a chattering robbin that she is, has returned to Kingston. Not Mrs. Mansfield, either, exactly. But let us explain :

Mrs. Mansfield fulfilled her promise. She laid the spiritual desolation of Kingston before Dr. Rand with

such earnestness of word and pitifulness of expression as quite touched that worthy's conscience. A vast field was open, and souls all ready for the harvest. But laborers there were none. What should be done?

Mrs. Mansfield, at fair and festival—at every church gathering—made herself exceedingly useful. Poor Mrs. Rand was gone from this world. Her disconsolate husband had wondered how he should get through the labors of Christmas again without her accustomed aid. The last Christmas had nearly proved the death of him. He was of a reserved nature, fond of his ease and of his books, and he disliked to be in the midst of a lot of planning, questioning, gossiping women. Mrs. Rand had taken all this trouble off his hands. She had superintended evergreening and decorating generally. She had advised this, and settled that; and when, at any time, perfect acquiescence was not given to her arrangements, she had but to say, "I have spoken to Dr. Rand, and he says it shall be so and so," when, in truth, she had not troubled him in the matter.

Now, Mrs. Mansfield had been formerly Mrs. Rand's right-hand woman. She knew, both from experience and intuition, Mrs. Rand's way of doing things. Accordingly it was easy and natural for her to step into her place in the line of overseeing and directing. She was submitted to with cheerfulness. It was so agreeable to have a head again, and not be obliged to trouble the Doctor, who could be cross and

peevish upon occasion. And Mrs. Mansfield was born to rule. Even the blindest could see that; much more Doctor Rand, with his keen gray eyes. He remembered how she and his wife had been dear friends. He began to compare her with his lost Lucy and was struck with the resemblance. The world had been to him a barren waste since Lucy died. Everything had gone wrong. Parish quarrels had multiplied. Spinsters had called each other names, and the members of the Dorcas Society had gotten each other so by the ears, he had ordered its suspension.

So many sick children died that he was filled with terror whenever he learned of a new case. He would groan and say: "If only Lucy were here, she would attend to it, and if anything could be done, it would be done, and I should have no responsibility."

His servants had grown sly and untrustworthy, and his only unmarried daughter, Rose, was running wild.

The Doctor was in a vexed maze, worse, even, than Christian's slough of despond.

He fell into a passion Christmas morning—there wasn't a button to his shirt! In the midst of this, he discovered holes in every fresh sock he attempted to draw on. This reminded him that his toe-nails had not been cut since the death of his wife, who used regularly to wash his feet once a week and trim his nails, as if he had been a great baby, which, indeed, he was.

At breakfast his coffee was bitter, and his steak, though rare, was burned. He scolded the cook, and called his daughter an indolent, negligent girl. He dealt puss, generally his favorite, a violent blow for coming around, as usual, for a crumb from the master's table. He turned a deaf ear to Fido's friendly whine, and later, read the family prayers with such distraction that he wound up with evening prayers without ever knowing it. In the midst of Christmas service, he found himself without pocket-handkerchief, to his utter discomfiture. This, too, when he was seized with a violent cold, and was a taker of snuff.

Mrs. Mansfield, through her glittering glasses, perceived the good Doctor's dilemma. Giving her own unfolded thread cambric to a little child in front of her, she whispered that it should be carried and laid upon the sacred desk.

So unusual a proceeding attracted the good man's attention, absent-minded though he was. He grasped the spotless linen as he would have laid hold of the golden thread that was to lead him up to Paradise.

At the same moment he was conscious that but one woman in the audience would have dared such a proceeding. But one woman; and with the reflection, instantaneous as it was, came an inspiration—yes, an inspiration—that he would marry her!

The brilliant thought, like a lily's perfume, left its fragrance—like a breath of wind, blew out his latent ire, and was to his weary soul like the grateful dews of evening to the thirsty flower. Sudden as to the

poets "had come a change over the spirit of his dream." He closed his sermon with unwonted eloquence. He pronounced the benediction with singular fervor.

Passing out amidst the crowd, he relaxed his usual self-absorption, bowed to the right and left, shook hands with old ladies, and upon young ones bestowed smiles—in short, conducted himself with so remarkable an air of graciousness as to excite observation.

At evening he thought it would be only civil to call upon Mrs. Mansfield and express to her personally his gratification and gratitude for her untiring services during the Christmas week.

Accordingly, Mrs. Mansfield became immensely astonished by a call from the Doctor of Divinity. What did it portend? He might have communicated with his Bishop, and some clergyman might have been sent out to benighted Kingston. She, therefore, made inquiry to that effect. No, nothing had been determined upon as yet.

The Reverend gentleman communicated his thanks, as he had intended, and launched forth upon the solid comfort there was in having some one like herself to take the lead in all these trivial but constant and necessary matters. This led him to speak of his lost wife, which drew forth expressions of sympathy and condolence from her surviving friend.

"Yes, she was a good wife—an excellent, noble woman. I did not think I should ever behold her like again. Indeed, I did not realize until she was

gone that she had been my right hand, as it were. I never thought, until to-day, that I could ever wish to supply her place; but I miss her at every turn—she was ever at hand and I had no thought but for my books and sermon."

Dr. Rand paused, coughed and blew his nose.

"The man will never think to return my handkerchief, and it is one of my new set," soliloquized the little lady, although she said aloud:

"Mrs. Rand was most estimable as a Christian and friend. I can well imagine how great is your loss, since I myself so greatly miss her society."

"You have lived a widow many years, Mrs. Mansfield," the widower observed.

"Twenty-one years, sir, the twenty-ninth of this month," involuntarily smiling at her unpremeditated mathematical exactness.

"So long? How has it happened you have never again married?"

Had any other person in the world but Dr. Rand asked this question, he would have received a curt answer, if not a withering rebuke.

"I do not believe in second marriages."

"No? Upon what principle?"

"I am confident I need not explain to *you*, Sir, my grounds for belief upon such a subject."

"Perhaps not—excuse me; I have bestowed little thought upon it—but you would not refuse a good offer, would you?"

"No; because I will never allow a man to make

me an offer. He shall be estopped before the question quits his lips."

" You appear to be decided."

" Besides, I have promised my son over and over that I will never again marry."

" You know what is said about bad promises."

" But I am speaking of *good* promises."

" Allowing yourself only to be judge."

" What need of any other judge, in a case wherein I only am concerned?"

" But this is a case wherein another is concerned. When I asked you to take poor Lucy's place and become my wife —"

" *When* you did—but you never did!" exclaimed Mrs. Mansfield, trembling and aghast, patting musically the floor with her tiny slippers.

" Have I not? I thought you understood me. Well, Mrs. Mansfield, I again ask you to become my second wife."

" Oh, Dr. Rand, you are crazy. How came you ever to think of such a thing? It is impossible. I have no wish—I assure you I can never think of marrying again."

Notwithstanding all the little lady's asseverations, she became Doctor Rand's second wife in less than two months thereafter. For all her broken promises her respected pastor gave her absolution, and, although she was one to rail against papal dispensations, and had much to say of the invalidity of priestly annulments, she reflected that circumstances alter

cases, and, for the second time, embarked upon the sea of matrimony, with a conscience calm as untroubled waters.

Whether the bride brought it about, or whether it was the Bishop's order from the first, Dr. Rand was obliged to leave his home and go to the far West.

He groaned inwardly at the tearing up of things; and, when it came to the upheaving and dismantling of his library, he went about like one lost. The bustling energy of his new wife wearied him. He took refuge in the church vestry, happy to leave all the packing-up, and all the *et ceteras* of moving to the women, who appeared elated in their own element of confusion.

Dora and Nellie, the Rev. doctor's married daughters, indignant at this new phase of things, threw angry glances at their stepmother, considering her to be the prime mover in this great change. But these visual daggers were but as child's darts against the iron helmet of the Mrs. Doctor's conscious indifference. A great work was to be accomplished among the heathen; Christian daughters ought to rejoice to give up their father to so holy a cause. Such was Mrs. Rand's reasoning.

It happened, therefore, in process of time, that Herbert Mansfield opened his doors to his mother and her new family. Whatever dissatisfaction or chagrin he may have experienced was quickly put to flight by the sunny presence of his sort-of-sister Rose Rand. She was in her fifteenth year, and, wonderful

to relate, looked at Herbert out of those same blue eyes, and smiled upon him with that sunny, joyous smile that he had been dreaming about since his boyhood. And, stranger still, her head was crowned with the tangled curls that wore the glitter of gold, and upon her dimpled cheek glowed the crimson flush of the lovely flower whose name she bore.

Herbert's mother, glancing from one child to the other, and noting the impression mutually made, smiled complacently, and whispered to the Doctor.

He looked up with amazement.

"Do not encourage such a thing. I will never give Lucy's child to a Romanist!" he said emphatically. His wife hastened to reply:

"No, of course not. But you and I are to move heaven and earth to bring back Herbert; your sweet child Rose may be a powerful lever for this difficult work."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

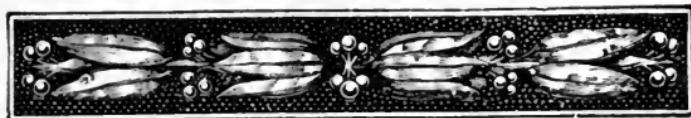
"Convert a Romanist! Yes, when Archimedes moves the world."

Notwithstanding the Doctor's incredulity, Mrs. Rand has faith, which, for a good cause, might move mountains. Meanwhile she has organized a sociable. Mrs. Gough, Mrs. Morrow, Jones, Smith, Green, *et al*, join in it heart and hand.

The Baptist Church has been given over to the Doctor for the present, and his wife declares that if most of the Baptists and several from the other sects do not come unto her true church, her powers of tact, persuasion and strategy will be at fault.

Although on the first and second Sunday Herbert walked off alone to Mass, instead of being beguiled by the winsome Rose to the desirable otherwhere, his mother still has faith that all will yet result as she wishes. It is to be hoped he will answer unto God's grace, which may be sufficient for him, surrounded though he be by counter temptations. Nor would the conversion to "Romanism" of the whole family be an unheard-of precedent. Did not Manning, Newman, Faber and other leaders of the great "Oxford Movement," seeking excuses for England's schism, and studying authorities for restoring practices and usages of the Primitive Church, become themselves converted to the True Church? And this to their own astonishment, and to the great confusion of Anglicanism, of which establishment they were bright and shining lights.





CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.—STRICKEN OFF THE ROLLS.

OUR simple story of Western life draweth to an end. Fain would we have made some of our characters of better stuff. It would be heaven and not earth, however, that place wherein only the true and good are found.

In this world of ours vice and virtue, folly and wisdom, though not walking hand in hand, dwell not far asunder.

We would like to bring Roxanna Carter, and also the many whom she represents to the healing waters of penance, and hear her sorrowful soul sob out its Miserere into the Divine ear; but she has passed from our observation. We know not her wanderings, and are content to leave her to the justice of one whose eye never slumbers, and who calls not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

After the first shock produced by all these late revelations and events, Stella Lancaster submitted piously to a separation from her newly-found sister. According to her late father's previously-arranged plans, she commenced her novitiate with the Order of the Visitation, in a southwestern city. Possessing unusual elements of piety and strength, it may be pre-

dicted, though hereafter the world take no note of the name of Marie Stella, that still the world will be the better for the unseen incense of her prayers, and her good deeds will be emblazoned in the Book of Life in letters of gold, and in pictures of silver.

The world holds many a Mark Varnam—as he was. Gifted with physical and intellectual endowments, fitted by nature and culture to become a bright and shining light, lacking the true faith, he degenerates into the selfish, narrow-minded man of the world, possessing no aims higher than his own personal gratification. Believing himself emancipated from shackles that bind, he soars unto forbidden heights, whence, like tortoise from eagle's talons, he falls, writhing and impotent, upon pitiless rocks or dangerous shoals. In despair he courts that night of death, in whose blackness he fondly deems he shall be eternally enveloped. Unless, indeed, as in the case of Mark Varnam of our story, a heavenly light interpose, and a heavenly hand lead unto the threshold of that earthly safeguard—the Catholic Church.

Kingston, grateful for a new sensation, and recovering from her surprise that Miss Leigh was Mrs. Varnam after all, and that to have become a Catholic was no new thing for her, individually and collectively flocked to do her reverence.

Yes, Kingston proclaimed the fact that she had all along known that Miss Leigh was a very proper kind of person, and that sometime she would be set right and justified.

And Kingston, a good deal of it, followed her to the train and saw her off, with protestations of affection, and tears of regret.

Cecilia and Mark returned to their own city home. The few of their former friends who sought them out were so distantly received that they made few future advances.

When it became known that they were about establishing a monthly to be devoted to the interests of Catholicity, the Intellectual Club, and the variously styled "knots" of liberalism that had hitherto known and honored Mark Varnam, took votes and unanimously declared that Mark and Cecilia Varnam, having become lunatics, their names should be stricken from the rolls.

Meantime, Cecilia and Mark work energetically in their new vocation. Reading often works of St. Augustine, they pause at these words :

"Woe to that daring soul which hoped that, having retired from Thee, she might still find something better."

Having washed out with tears of contrition the sins and follies of the past, they leave it unto God; calmly walking their remaining journey, upborne by heavenly strength, fully assured, because divinely promised that

"After the winter cometh summer,
After the night the day returneth,
After the storm cometh a great calm."



